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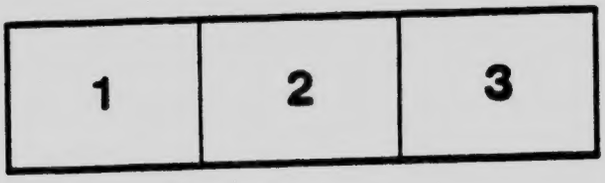

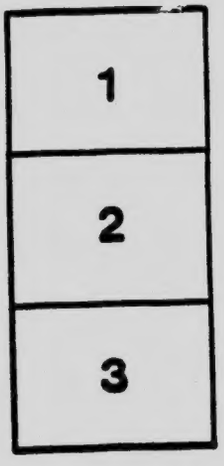

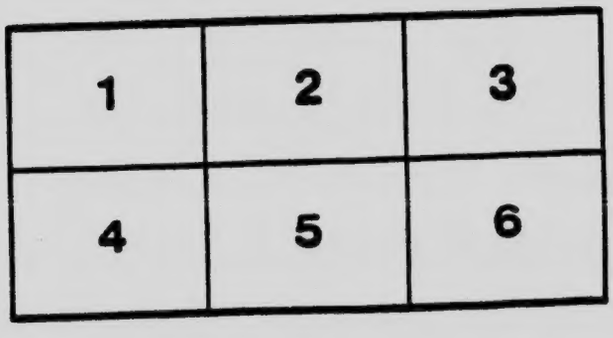

Marie Brian Meredith

From

Her Grandfather

With

Much Love and Pride

Christmas

1918

Atlanta

THE SWORD OF DELIVERANCE

THE SWORD OF DELIVERANCE

A STORY OF THE BALKAN WAR, THE BATTLE OF LULE BURGAS, AND THE SIEGE OF ADRIANOPLE

BY

CHARLES GILSON

AUTHOR OF "THE PIRATE AEROPLANE," "THE LOST COLUMN"
"THE SWORD OF FREEDOM," "THE LOST ISLAND"
"THE SPY," "THE RACE ROUND THE WORLD"
"THE LOST EMPIRE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. C. SEPPINGS WRIGHT

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PREFACE

THE war-correspondent, "Mr. Steed Bayly," who figures in the following pages, and who is alleged, for the sake of my story, to have taken the excellent photographs included in this volume, is an entirely fictitious character. These photographs—which I venture to think are a somewhat novel feature in a book of this description—were in reality taken by Mr. Seppings Wright, the special war-correspondent and artist of the *Central News Agency* and the *London Illustrated News* in Tripoli and Thrace during the recent troubles, whose work is too well known to need further commendation from me.

In regard to the account I have given of the Battle of Lule Burgas, I have been obliged, by force of circumstance, to rely to a very large extent upon the details given in Mr. E. Ashmead-Bartlett's book. To anyone desirous of going further into this subject of the Balkan War, I can recommend *With the Turks in Thrace* as the most authentic book on the subject, as well as one of the most manly and modest narratives I ever read.

CHARLES GILSON.

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Photo by Steed Bayly, Special War Correspondent of the "London Daily Gazette"

THE SWORD OF DELIVERANCE

CHAPTER I

THE FORTUNE-TELLER

LATE on a certain afternoon, in the spring of the year 1912, a strange party of three men might have been seen ascending a bridle-path on the lower slopes of the mountains to the east of the Juma Pass. A great, burning sun stood over the mountain-tops towards the frontier of Bulgaria and Macedonia. By the side of the path, at a place where there was a level stretch of grass and a rose-garden, was an old Jewish pedlar, seated at a table upon which were spread a number of small cakes, a collection of beads and ribbons, and several glasses and cups. The old man's arms were folded on his chest, and he was fast asleep.

There could be no mistake as to the nationality of, at least, two of the travellers. The Englishman is by no means a frequent visitor to the Balkans, because in Turkey and the

neighbouring states, with the exception of Constantinople and the larger towns, the English language is of no more practical value than Chinese in the Sahara.

Between these two Englishmen there was a marked family likeness, in spite of the fact that one was well advanced in years, and the other could not have left school more than six months before. Each was tall, and deep of chest, though the elder stooped a little, and walked with an apparent limp. They had the same square-cut features, and the same expression of the eyes.

As for the third member of the party, he was a gipsy hammal, or porter, who strode upon his way, agile as a panther, bearing upon his shoulders a load of blankets, provisions, cooking untensils, and the like, which no European could have carried for twenty yards. His feet, encased in raw-hide shoes, fell noiselessly upon the path. His complexion was the colour of reddish clay; his eyes lustrous black, with that green light in them which one may see in the eyes of cats, and which warns Turk, Bulgarian, and Serb alike that the gipsy of the East is not a man to be trusted.

The elder of the two Englishmen walked up

to the Jew, and slapping him soundly on the back, addressed him in a loud, boisterous voice, speaking the language of the cultured Turk with an almost perfect accent.

"Hullo, baba!" said he. "You seem to have set up your stall in a somewhat lonely place. Trade does not appear to be brisk."

The old Jew awoke with a start, laid hold of the table with both hands, as if he expected it to run away, and offered up a prayer in the Yiddish of the East. He then looked at the Englishman for some time, and shaking his long beard, mumbled something in Turkish to the effect that he had never seen the gentleman before.

Now, this could not very well have happened in England where the personal appearance of Sir Charles Thornton was almost as well known as that of the Prime Minister himself. In all probability, no man living had done more for the advance of science. For all that, his energies were by no means confined to the lecture-hall and the study. By reason of his travels in the desert parts of Arabia and Bokhara, where he had journeyed for the purpose of excavating and exploring the buried cities of the past, he deserved to rank with the great explorers, such as Livingstone and Speke.

He was a man who was an utter stranger to the meaning of fear. With a loaded revolver in one hand, and a bag of small money in the other, it was his custom to find his own way across but half-discovered countries, among peoples who were reputed to be both treacherous and savage. He was, of course, a linguist of repute. His science demanded that. As well as several of the languages of modern Europe, he was fully conversant with Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, and had also a smattering of Bulgarian. As for the limp with which he walked, that was due to a rifle-shot in the mountains of Armenia, whither he had ventured at a time when the massacres were in progress, against the advice of his friends.

He had come now to the Balkans upon an errand which was, to him, of the greatest import. He had located in the Rhodopé Mountains a Macedonian fortress of the Empire of Alexander the Great. He had been told that, in the best of times, these mountains were dangerous to travellers by reason of the gipsies and the armed bands; but, when his heart was set on a thing, it required more than a suggestion of danger to turn Sir Charles from his purpose. On one occasion he had thrashed an

Arab slave-dealer before the eyes of his slaves, until the man cried out for mercy. He had been known to sit at his study desk for four days at a stretch without ever going to bed. He had a brain and a right arm that never grew weary, a heart soft as a woman's, and nerves of steel.

His nephew, Philip Thornton, who now accompanied him, was just such a lad as he himself had been in the seventies. As head of the sixth form of a leading public school, the boy had gained one of the best scholarships at Cambridge, in addition to which he had been captain of football and a member of the school cricket eleven. Already, he had taken up the study of that science for which his uncle was so justly famous. He had even devoted several months to learning the Turkish language; and it had been at his own express desire that he had left England with Sir Charles upon an expedition which was destined to begin so tragically and to be fraught with such adventure.

And meanwhile, we have left the scientist with his hand upon the old Jew's shoulder and his grey eyes twinkling in fun.

"Come, come, old fellow," said he; "I thought your people had the reputation of being

good men of business. What profit do you expect to make in a deserted place like this? Besides, it's getting late."

The old man smiled, nodded his head in a manner vastly knowing, and then pointed down the valley with a long and skinny finger.

"Sir," he answered, "there is a festival in the village yonder. Presently, the people will be coming here to dance the hora. Then, I shall sell my cakes, my beautiful beads, and my sherbet."

Sir Charles swung round upon his heel, clapping his hands together.

"Philip," he cried, "this is an opportunity not to be missed. You will see Bulgarian peasants in their tribal dress; you will hear gipsy music as it is played nowhere else in the world. We may as well camp here, and make up for lost time by a longer march to-morrow."

They selected a suitable camping upon the hillside, some thirty yards from the path, and here the hammal put down his heavy burden. Within a few minutes they had set up three of those miniature tents which are called *tentes d'abri*, and a wood fire was burning brightly, hissing and crackling, and shooting red-hot

embers into the grass. T' . hammal, who appeared to combine the offices of porter, dragoman and cook, betook himself to the village to procure a bucket of water and provisions. He was a broad-shouldered, muscular fellow, with a gait when he walked like some great beast of prey.

Soon after he had gone, they heard sounds of approaching music, and walking a little distance upon the path, they turned the angle of a clump of trees, and there before them was a great number of people, approaching in their direction.

At the head of this procession was a family of four persons—gipsies, clothed in rags: a man and his wife—the man with a fiddle, the woman with a guitar—both playing as they walked; they were preceded by their son and heir, a barefooted urchin of about eight years of age, who progressed by means of a series of somersaults, commonly called "cart-wheels," and whose black, tangled hair fell over his forehead like a mop; they were followed by an old hag, hobbling upon two sticks, withered and wrinkled—a mere bundle of bones and rags.

On the heels of the old woman, in strange contrast to the dingy poverty of the gipsies,

there followed about two hundred Bulgar peasants in gay holiday attire.

The women wore white dresses, trimmed with braid and lace, and over these dark velvet pinafores, embroidered with the most fantastic designs, such as flowers, cocks and hens. Each one had several necklaces round her neck and bracelets on her arms; and since many of these were composed of little silver coins, strung together like so many beads, the party came forward with a jingling sound like cymbals, which, mingled with their laughter and the music, made it apparent from the first that they were out to enjoy themselves.

The men wore velvet coats over white shirts as elaborately braided as the dresses of the women. Their white, tight-fitting trousers were of sheep-skin; and they all marched in time to the music, which was fiercely Oriental, reminding one of a sand-storm in the desert, or an Arab dhow before the wind.

Sir Charles Thornton and his nephew awaited the approach of the gala procession at the place where the road met the bridle-path. When the peasants had gone by, they turned to follow. It was then that they observed a young man, dressed in the sombre brown uniform of a lieu-

tenant of the Bulgarian Regular Army, who seemed to have attached himself to the procession more as a spectator than with any idea of taking part in the festivities themselves.

Sir Charles, who was too wide a traveller to imagine that the so-called blunt manners of an Englishman ever create anything but an unfavourable impression among foreigners, lifted his hat and wished the officer, Good-day.

Immediately, the lieutenant raised his hand to the salute. Anyone who did not know the country would have been surprised at his extreme youthfulness. He could not have been more than seventeen. Bulgaria is one of the youngest of kingdoms; its army is one of the youngest of armies. Several battalions, both of the Active Army and the Reserve, are commanded by men well under thirty; and in consequence the subalterns, and sometimes even the junior captains, are of an age when the English boy is still at school.

"I see you are an Englishman, sir," said the young officer. "I can assure you, we Bulgarians regard the English nation with sincere respect. You are travelling, I suppose, for pleasure?"

"For pleasure," said Sir Charles, "and for

knowledge. We hope to make our way along the mountains towards the Servian frontier. Our visit to your country is mainly in the interests of science. This is my nephew—Philip Thornton. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"My name, sir, is Boris Petroff," said the Bulgarian, saluting again, "Lieutenant of Infantry. But surely, sir, you do not intend to venture across the mountains alone? I assure you it is not safe."

Sir Charles Thornton smiled. "I don't mind that in the least," said he. "Besides, I understood you to say that Englishmen were popular just now."

"England," said the lieutenant, "will always be respected in Bulgaria, by the people who understand; because she is the only European Power that does not interfere with our affairs for purely selfish reasons. England does not want to steal our territory, which is the case with both Austria and Russia. Still, you can expect neither the brigands who live in the mountains, nor the gipsies who roam from place to place, and who are the scum of the earth, as everyone knows, to understand these things. They believe that every Englishman is a million-

aire; and they would not hesitate to murder a man for his money."

"That will not trouble us," said Sir Charles, quite simply. "Our way lies along the northern slopes of the Rhodopé Mountains, and thither we should go if the danger were twenty times greater than you say. In the meantime, we intend to enjoy ourselves. I hear they are going to dance. This is my nephew's first visit to your country. He will be interested in a scene which is so different from anything that can be seen in England."

They continued to talk as they followed the peasants and the music to the open stretch of grass by the rose-garden where the old Jew pedlar had set up his stall. Lieutenant Petroff volunteered the information that he had obtained eight days' leave from his regiment, which was stationed in Sofia, where he lived with his sister. He had come on a visit to his native village, where his father was a grower of roses. Rose growing, for the manufacture of the perfume, called "attar of roses," is one of the chief industries of Bulgaria. Also, in Turkey, a great portion of the plain of Thrace is one enormous rose-garden. The peasants press the juice from the roses for the perfume, and

the remains of the petals are converted into jam.

When they arrived at the Jew's stall on the bridle-path, they found that the old gentleman was now not only fully awake, but doing a roaring trade. The day had been hot, and he was soon sold out of the various sweet drinks that he had supplied in the smallest glasses he could buy. The young men purchased bead necklaces and bangles for the younger ladies; and it was not long before everyone of the cakes had disappeared.

Then, the two gipsy musicians stationed themselves upon the grass, and struck up one of those wild and restive melodies so loved by the Tartar peasants of the East. The men and women joined hands and formed a ring around the players; and this ring went dancing round and round while the music grew faster and faster, and the melody more wild.

Meanwhile, the old hag hobbled towards the two Englishmen and the young lieutenant, who had seated themselves by the side of the bridle-path. As she approached, they saw that she was more than commonly repulsive. Her eyes were weak and colourless; her grey hair matted with dirt, and the skin upon her face so cracked

and wrinkled that she might have been a hundred years of age. She muttered a few words in the Chingeni language, which no one but a gipsy can understand, and then spoke in the vile Turkish of the Jewish Mahallahs of the towns.

"Tell your fortunes, rich, foreign gentlemen," she croaked. "The old gipsy woman is wise, with the wisdom of many years."

Philip Thornton gave the old woman ten centimes, which the young Bulgarian protested would be a fortune to her. For a moment she allowed her eyes to gloat upon the small, glittering coin; then she tried to bite it in her toothless gums, to see if it were false; and finally, with a chuckle, she thrust it into a leather bag which depended from her neck.

"Now," she said, "let me look at your hands. I will tell you what is true; and *I know*." There was something weird in the way she said "she knew." She was like a witch. It was not difficult to believe that, indeed, she had the power of seeing into the future.

It was Boris Petroff who was the first to hold out his hand, and she took it between her claw-like fingers, looked at it an instant, and then shook a forefinger in the young Bulgarian's face.

"Beware," she said, "of Karkas, for there is an eye that sees by night."

Sir Charles looked up amazed, and asked her what she meant. But Boris threw back his head and laughed.

"I understand," said he. "Karkas is one of the forts of Adrianople: and the eye that sees by night can only mean a searchlight. That is to say, before long the First Bulgarian Brigade will be hammering on the gates of the citadel of Turkey. I could ask for nothing better."

The old woman smiled and nodded her head, time and again, as much as to say that the young officer was right. And then she grasped Philip Thornton's hand, which she lifted close to her eyes.

"A long night," said she, "with thunder in the sky, and clouds of fire; a long search, with blood upon the path, and at the end—a dark, moving grave."

They asked Boris to interpret what she meant, but he was quite unable to say. They asked her to explain more fully, and even gave her another ten centimes. Still, she would do no more than repeat the words: "A long night, a long search, and at the end—a dark, moving grave."

It was now Sir Charles's turn, and with a smile upon his lips, half good-humoured and half sceptical, the scientist held forth his hand. The old hag looked at it an instant, and then dropped it with an exclamation which was at once a chuckle and a shudder, and which was horrible to hear.

"In two days," said she, "the book is closed."

CHAPTER II

THE GIPSY CAMP

Boris sprang to his feet and shook his fist at the old woman, who cringed before him, her face half hidden in her folded arms. And meanwhile, the dance went on, and the peasants with their gay dresses and their shouts and laughter went flying round and round.

"How dare you speak thus!" he cried. The blood had flown to his cheeks. His eyes were ablaze. Philip Thornton saw then, for the first time, that, despite the conventionality of the uniform he wore, there was more than a little of the savage in the soul of the young Bulgarian.

"I have said but the truth," the old woman whined. "I speak with the wisdom of years."

"You speak falsely," cried the other. "Go. There, take that, and be off." He flung a small coin upon the ground, and with a gesture sent her packing.

Sir Charles Thornton rose to his great height, and stretched his arms as if, after a long day's march, he was somewhat stiff in his joints.

"I assure you," said he, "you take these things too seriously. For myself, I am not at all superstitious. The good lady's words have not distressed me in the least. I have heard tales like that before."

Boris Petroff, however, who had the blood of the East in his veins, was of a different way of thinking. It was evident that the old gipsy's prophecies caused him some uneasiness. He fingered the hilt of his sword, and then sat down upon the ground, with folded arms, frowning like a man who is lost in the most unpleasant thoughts.

In the meantime, as the dance progressed, various people joined in—men, women, and even children—until, at last, the circle was so large that it was necessary to make a break somewhere. This was done at the bidding of a man who appeared to have taken upon himself the duties of master of the ceremonies; and then, the dancers began to move nearer and nearer to the musicians, in the form of a spiral, until the whole crowd were so pressed together and the laughter and merriment were so great, that the players threw down their instruments, and passed round the hat.

By then, the hammal had returned from the

village with a pail of water, a very lean and scraggy chicken, and an enormous pumpkin, and was soon at work preparing the evening meal. This man, whom Sir Charles had engaged in Sofia, and who went by the name of Barco, called himself a Turk, though he was undoubtedly of Gipsy blood. He was reported to be well acquainted with the many by-paths over the mountains. Moreover, he was that *rara avis*—a gipsy who could both read and write. He had offered his services on the very day of their arrival at the Bulgarian capital, expressing his willingness to convert himself into a beast of burden, and lauding his own capacities as a cook. He seemed rather surprised, however, when he learnt that the scientist and his nephew intended to travel on foot, bivouacking night by night wheresoever the end of the day's march found them. This was not the habit of the majority of travellers who had come the way of Barco. Sir Charles, however, had his own methods. He had spent a great deal of his life in the open air. Both he and his nephew carried knapsacks on their backs; and these, together with the load borne by the hammal, contained their camp equipment. They carried with them a very limited supply of pro-

visions, subsisting for the most part on what they could purchase in the villages they passed.

When their meal was prepared, they asked the Bulgarian lieutenant to join them. Thanking them for their kindness, Boris said he would be delighted. Seated cross-legged around the camp fire, the three talked until long after dark; and it was during that conversation that there sprang up between the young soldier and Philip Thornton a friendship that was destined to hold these two together throughout the stormy days to follow, and to lead to a result which neither could possibly have foreseen.

They talked first of politics, the never-ending problem of the East. In Boris, they recognised the bitterness of feeling that invariably exists in a small country encompassed on every side by larger and stronger nations. For years, Bulgaria has been like a small boy at the mercy of three atrocious bullies: Austria to the west, Russia to the north, and Turkey to the south. But Bulgaria was not sufficiently servile, and she was far too proud and ambitious, to play the part of a "fag." Since the times of the Shipka Pass, when, with the aid of Russia, she gained her freedom from the Turk, war with Turkey has been regarded as inevitable. Owing to the per-

sistent ill-treatment of the Bulgarian peasants of the Turkish district of Macedonia, sooner or later the blow had to be struck. But, if Boris Petroff hated the Turk, he hated the Greek with an even more bitter hatred. Within recent years, Bulgaria severed her connection with the Greek Orthodox Church, and founded a Church of her own. Much of the terrible massacreing of wholly innocent people, which has been taking place in Macedonia during the last twenty years, has been between Christian and Christian, whilst Turkey has remained an unconcerned spectator.

Still, as the young Bulgarian pointed out to them, and as they knew already, the Turkish Government was alone to blame for the extreme poverty that existed in Macedonia and Thrace, for the gross injustice with which the foreign subjects of the Sultan were treated, and for a condition of affairs that amounted to incessant turmoil and rebellion, wherein the burning of villages and murder were affairs of almost daily occurrence. For years the European Powers had been endeavouring to teach Turkey to rule. That Turkey had profited nothing by this teaching was apparent, since the country was in a worse condition than ever. It was therefore

time to take the matter out of the hands of the Turk, to set free the Bulgar peasants who were oppressed, ill-treated and abused by the wearers of the fez. In a word, the time was come for the Sword of Deliverance to be drawn, to drive the Turk from Europe, across the Bosphorus, and into the deserts of Asia whence he came.

As the young man talked, he raised his voice higher and higher, and once more his eyes flashed and the savage stirred in his soul. Neither Sir Charles Thornton nor his nephew could deny the truth in all that he had to say. After all, his feelings were natural enough. He beheld his nation, strong and virile in its youth, bound beneath the yoke by men who, though they had fought bravely in the past, were corrupt, arrogant, and lazy.

Nearly five centuries had elapsed since the standard of the Greek Byzantine Empire, the last bulwark of ancient Rome, had been swept from the walls of Constantinople by the advancing hordes of the invincible Ottoman Turk. Two hundred years before then, the Bulgars—men of Tartar descent, not unrelated to the Turk himself—had come south to the Danube, from the Volga and the Black Sea coast. We

must go far back into history before we find the first encounter, the first clash of swords, between the men of these two Tartar races, the one moving south and the other northward.

Throughout all the world, there has never been but a single Law of Race: the weak must give way before the strong. We find it in the history of our own nation: the Saxon drove the Celt into Wales and Cornwall, and himself went down before the Norman conqueror. It is the same wherever we look: the Aryan drove through India from the north, and the Gond fled to the hills; the Medes and the Persians swept from the grass-lands of Central Asia to the Nile, and governed wheresoever they went; at about the time of the Conquest of England, the fair-haired, blue-eyed giants of the north swept down upon Europe from the shores of the Baltic, and even established themselves on the northern coast of Africa.

If it is possible to explain the problem of the Balkans, the explanation is to be found in this relentless Law of Race. Like the Japanese and the German, the Bulgarian must have a fair field for his energies; and for that fair field he is prepared to fight. If he wins, he has proved himself worthy of the reward.

This, at least, was the opinion held by Sir Charles Thornton, who—as the world knows—was no enemy to the Turk. Philip was a firm believer in his uncle's views, and Boris Petroff had the young man's sympathy from the start. Besides, he had liked the lieutenant from the very moment he first set eyes upon him. Boris was, perhaps, less reserved than the majority of his race. He gave one the immediate impression of being extremely earnest, capable of showing great determination and tenacity of purpose, thoroughly honourable, sincere and loyal—one who would make an invaluable friend, but an enemy by no means to be despised.

In strong contrast to these excellent qualities, was a trait which he shared in common with the majority of his race: he was undoubtedly superstitious. During the course of the evening, the conversation turned upon the subject of the old gipsy woman who had told their fortunes. From what the young Bulgarian said, it was evident that he placed infinite faith in every word the old witch had uttered.

Speaking very seriously indeed, he told Sir Charles that he feared some danger hung above his head. He implored the scientist to put off his visit to the mountains, until the times were

more favourable, and the country in less disorder. He said that to ignore the old woman's warning was to fly in the face of Providence; but his protestations were of no avail: Sir Charles was determined to go. When Boris was about to leave them, to return to the village where his father lived, he took Sir Charles's hand to say Good-bye.

"Once more," said he, "I entreat you to change your plans."

"It is quite impossible," said the other, smiling. "In two months' time I must return to England. I am a busy man."

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders, and sighed.

"To-morrow night, and the night after," said he, "I shall think of you. I shall not be able to sleep."

With that, he turned upon his heel, and went down the hill. They heard his footsteps for some time; and then, the night was quiet, except for an owl that swept overhead with noiseless wing, and hooted as it passed. It was after he had gone that Sir Charles remarked that he had noticed a strong physical resemblance between the young Bulgarian and his nephew.

The following morning they were well upon the line of march before the sun had risen. At midday, they passed the main road, which crosses the mountains at the Juma Pass, and soon afterwards halted for a meal. In the cool of evening they continued on their way, still holding to the northern side of the mountains, which grew more desolate and rugged. The next day, a journey of several miles brought them to a large forest of oak and juniper trees, with firs on the upper slopes, overlooking a vast plain, green with vineyards, and where fruit-trees were in blossom.

The path which they had followed throughout had now narrowed, and in this district was so little used, that grass was growing under foot and stones were covered with moss. According to their calculations, their destination should be somewhere close at hand, on the other side of the forest.

That night they camped in a glade where a cluster of great rocks was overtopped by trees whose branches were so interwoven as to form a kind of roof above their heads. The light of the stars, and even of the moon, was altogether shut out. When their wood fire burned up, the flames cast a lurid reflection upon the rocks, the

trunks of the trees, and the under side of the leaves, which so jumped and flickered that it seemed as if Nature danced around them. This suggestion of life in the forest was enhanced by the incessant bubbling of a spring which came forth among the rocks and formed a pool, the water from which found its outlet into a small stream that flowed down the hill. Indeed, this was the very place where, in classic days, nymphs might have danced to the pipes of Pan.

Philip and his uncle had followed the brook some little distance, to find a suitable place for washing—an operation that Barco generally managed to dispense with; and when they returned to the glade, they found to their astonishment that the hammal had unaccountably disappeared.

Since the man did not return after the lapse of several minutes, they began to fear that some misadventure had befallen him. The brown bear is still to be found in these mountains, and wolves are very numerous, though the ravages of these latter are confined, for the most part, to small game, such as deer, foxes, hares, and polecats. However, to search haphazard in the forest would be worse than fruitless, by reason of the darkness; they would be certain

to lose their way. They could only continue to follow the path which they had traversed for the last three days, in the hope that Barco was not far ahead. Accordingly, taking with them a lantern, they set out together, having heaped more wood upon the fire. It is a curious coincidence that, before they had gone ten yards, Sir Charles stopped abruptly and laid a hand upon his nephew's shoulder.

"Philip," said he, "I have never told you of Yildirim Bey?"

He conveyed the question by an intonation of the voice. Philip answered that, to the best of his belief, he had never heard the name in his life.

"Yildirim," said Sir Charles, "is a Turk of the Turks; hospitable, proud, dignified, a warrior who would choose to die with his face towards the enemy. However, he differs from the majority of his countrymen in some very important particulars; he is neither corrupt nor neglectful of his duties. I know of no more capable man in Turkey." Sir Charles paused, and then went on in the low voice of one who conveys a secret. "I must tell you," said he, "it is not only in the interests of science that I am here. The fact is, I have meddled in affairs

which, I suppose, should lie outside my province. I am acting as intermediary between Yildirim Bey and a certain English millionaire. Should anything happen to me, it will be important for you to see Yildirim, who resides in Adrianople."

Philip was puzzled. He regarded his uncle in surprise. He was just able to distinguish Sir Charles's features by the jumping light of the lantern. There was something in the face of the elder man that was terribly serious. His nephew had never heard him speak with such evident emotion. We all know that, for some reason or other, certain moods are infectious. When Philip spoke, there was a tremor in his voice.

"Why do you tell me this?" he asked.

His uncle shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't say," said he. "I thought it best to let you know. Come, we must look for Barco."

Holding the lantern in his hand, Sir Charles swung forward on the path, Philip following close upon his heels.

It was as well they carried a light, for the darkness was so great that otherwise they would not have been able to see a yard before their faces. Their way led them uphill. It seemed

the pathway ran parallel to the brook, for the gurgling sound of the water was constant in their ears. Despite the fact that the day had been warm, the night was cold; and a soft wind had sprung up from the north-east which caused the branches of the trees to rustle in the night.

Presently, they came to a place where a bright light shone forth immediately before them. It appeared quite suddenly, like a flash-light on the sea; and a little after they heard a strange noise which they could not, at first, associate with any fixed idea.

As they drew nearer, approaching stealthily through the forest, they found that this noise was a medley of many varied sounds. In the first place, there was music, similar to that which they had heard on the previous afternoon, when the Bulgarians danced the "hora." Then, there were men's voices, raised high in anger, or excitement. And lastly, there was the shrill, high-pitched voice of a woman who sang some wild folk-song of the desert, which carried further and sounded clearer than the gruffer voices of the men. Sir Charles raised the lantern, opened the glass, and blew out the light. Then they advanced more warily than ever, Philip actually on tip-toe.

After a while they came to an open place amid the trees, very similar to the glade where they had camped. Here, a great fire was burning that sent the smoke upward to the branches of the trees, the leaves upon which curled and withered in the heat. Before the fire was a kind of stage where six musicians were playing, heart and soul in the matter, rocking their heads to the time. There were three fiddles, an accordion, a zither played with hammers, and a "tambouratch"—a large, bass guitar.

Upon this primitive stage—which was, in fact, nothing but the body of a bullock-cart, raised from the axle-tree and turned upside down—a girl sang and danced, brandishing a knife in her hand. Her song was evidently some composition in the spirit of revenge, since, from time to time—apparently at the end of every verse—she made as if she stabbed an enemy, and lifted a shriek that was terrible to hear. At which a murmur, menacing like the growl of beasts, passed over the unshaven, villainous-looking crowd that formed her audience.

Philip Thornton and his uncle were well hidden from view of those around the fire by the thickness of the undergrowth. They re-

viewed the scene, in all its romantic savagery, as people in a theatre see a play. There was no need for Sir Charles to tell his nephew that these people were vagrant gipsies of the East, whom Boris Petroff had described as "the scum of the earth." Not a word that the girl sang, or that passed among her audience, was comprehensible to the travellers, since neither was acquainted with the ancient Chingeni language. For all that, it was plain that the singer strove to incite her hearers to some deed of blood, and that, word by word, she worked them up to a fever heat of excitement; so that before long they might not be responsible for their actions.

By their own traditions, the gipsies are descended from Cain, the murderer of his brother Abel. Those that have crossed the Carpathians into Western Europe have mingled to some extent with the races of the West; but the gipsies of the Balkans are sprung by direct descent from their dark-skinned ancestors who were driven from India in the early centuries of the Christian era. They are the thieves and beggars, the scavengers and wastrels of the East. They roam from Greece to Roumania, from Bosnia to the Dardanelles—a homeless

nation, with no written language of their own, and with some mysterious rites in the way of religion, the secret of which no man yet has ever been able to discover.

When the girl had finished her song, the gipsies called upon her by the Turkish name of Leila. There was no doubt now that they were well primed for whatsoever she desired them to do, for several knives were drawn and flourished in the air. At heart, the gipsy is, perhaps, the greatest coward in the world. He is, however, susceptible to music, which can play upon his nature as it works in the evil spirit of a snake.

But the girl herself, the singer, was a snake. She was lithe and supple, and beautiful despite her rags; and in the flash of her dark green eyes, and the frown that lay upon her brows, there was something indescribably venomous and cruel. The knife she twisted with her fingers was a plaything that, beyond doubt, she would not hesitate to use. As she appeared in the red glow of the fire, with the dark night around her, she seemed to Philip Thornton another Fury, the very incarnation of the genius of evil.

Raising her knife, so that the blade flashed

in the firelight, and pointing with a finger of the other hand to the east, she seemed to call for a man. And immediately, *Barco* sprang upon the platform, at her side.

There was a shout of applause: and Philip caught the word "Inglizhar," which could mean "Englishman," and nothing else. It was then, for the first time, he recognised their danger, and seizing his uncle by the arm, he attempted to drag him away.

It was too late, however. They were too near the gipsy encampment to hope to escape. A piece of wood, a brittle fallen branch, broke underfoot with a loud snap, and they were instantly discovered by both Barco and the girl. With a roar like that of a pack of wolves as they rush in upon their quarry, the whole gang swept down upon the travellers.

CHAPTER III

BETRAYED

WHAT happened in the next brief seconds cannot be told in a word. Philip thrust his hand into his hip-pocket; but, before he could draw his revolver, both arms were pinned to his sides. Struggling frantically, he was half led, half carried into the open space by the fire. Though he did not desist from his efforts, he soon found there was small chance of escape. He was overpowered by five men, each one more than his equal in the matter of physical strength. It was only the sight of his uncle, and the tragedy of the scene that followed, that made him determined not to resign himself to Fate.

Sir Charles fought his way into the firelight, in the midst of a struggling mass. In one hand he held his revolver; and to this wrist two men clung in desperation. Another gipsy, full length upon the ground, had hold of his legs, and was dragged, inch by inch, towards the fire. Barco himself, the treacherous hammal, having

engaged his employer from the front, had been seized by the throat, to be driven backward as Sir Charles endeavoured to reach his nephew.

Of the struggle that followed, Philip was an impotent spectator. Try as he might, he could do nothing: he could render his uncle no help. And almost before he knew it, the snake girl had glided up to him, and lashing a rope around his waist, had so bound him to the trunk of a tree that he was no longer at liberty to move.

He saw Sir Charles strike out with his fist, and send Barco reeling backward. But the man upon the ground still clung to the Englishman's ankles; and a moment after, Sir Charles tripped and fell. In less than a second, he was on his feet again; and then three shots from his revolver rang out into the wood.

The Eastern gipsy dreads a firearm as a cur-dog dreads the whip. Sir Charles had fired without aim; indeed it is more than probable that his revolver had gone off by mistake. In consequence, no one was hit; but the cowards retreated with despatch, and endeavoured to hide themselves behind the trunks of the trees and the undergrowth.

Only the girl remained. Knife in hand, she approached in a crouching attitude. She re-

sembled a tiger about to spring. Barco crawled across her path on hands and knees, and stooping, she whispered a few quick words in his ear. Then, she went on drawing nearer to Sir Charles, who could not so far forget the inherent instincts of his race as to fire upon a woman.

The gipsy girl spoke in Turkish—the Turkish of the peasant classes, which is distinguished from the language of the cultured by its want of Arabic words.

"Thou art a fool," said she, "to play the spy upon the gipsies. Do you think we mean you harm?"

For answer, Sir Charles pointed to his nephew, who was bound securely to a tree. Also, he reminded the girl that she herself and her companions carried knives.

Without a doubt, the cunning of this woman was something fiendish. At this moment, Sir Charles Thornton held the upper hand. He was free; his revolver was loaded; and there was not a firearm in the gipsy camp. He had but to shoot down one, to scatter the whole band to the four quarters of the compass. He refrained only because it was a woman who approached him, though she carried a knife in her hand and the glint of murder was in her eye.

Just now, she laughed, throwing, now and again, a furtive glance towards the revolver.

"Thou knowest," said she, "that the gipsies have their secrets; and because they have their secrets, they are afraid of spies. It is plain that thou and thy friend are *ghiaurs*, foreigners from the west. The *ghiaurs* are our friends. They ask us to play; we sing to them, and they give us money."

"Rest assured," said Sir Charles, "we mean nothing but friendship. Suffer us to go in peace, and you will not repent it."

"It is well," said the gipsy girl, as if they had arrived at the conclusion of the whole affair. "To prove to you that we mean no harm, I throw away my knife."

So saying, she cast her knife upon the ground in a kind of savage wrath, so that the point was driven deep into the soil. There, by reason of the length and fineness of the blade, it vibrated, trembling like a leaf.

The girl danced, pointing to the shaking knife. It seemed natural for her to dance. She danced as the birds sing.

"See," she cried, "it is as if it lives. When it is still, the light in the moon goes out."

Sir Charles was unable to understand her

words. None the less, his eyes followed the direction indicated, and he watched the handle of the knife quivering in the firelight. No doubt, by reason of the weird gesticulations and the dancing of the girl, the object seemed to fascinate him. It was as she had said: the thing might have been alive. For some moments he did not move his gaze. And at the end of that time, there came a sudden cry from Philip—a cry to his uncle to stand upon his guard.

Once again, the warning was too late. Whilst the snake girl attracted Sir Charles's attention from the front, Barco, knife in hand, was creeping like a cat behind him, in the shadow of the trees. As Philip gave the warning, the hammal sprang, and with a wild shout, drove his knife between the shoulder-blades of one of the most notable men in Europe. Sir Charles sank to the ground in silence, and lay quite still, huddled and terrible in death.

That scene will live in the mind of Philip Thornton to the very end of his days. It was a tragedy so pitiless and wasteful. He struggled in a kind of madness to free himself from the bonds that bound him. He called loudly upon his uncle by name, and since the still form gave

no answer, fearing Sir Charles was dead, he renewed his efforts with such tempestuous violence that the cords cut deep into his wrists.

"Be quick!" cried the girl to Barco. "Quick!"

Though she spoke in the gipsy language, there could be no doubt as to the meaning of her words. At the same time, she pointed excitedly in the direction of the path by which they had come.

Barco picked up the lantern which Sir Charles had thrown down, lit it, and set off running as fast as he could go.

For a while there was silence around the fire. Everyone of the gipsies had a guilty look, even the girl herself. They seemed terrified by the deed they had committed, and could neither look directly at the evidence of their crime nor could they look away from it for long. They had, perhaps, some vision of the gallows, for both Turk and Bulgar made short shift of the gipsy criminal. The girl bent down, felt the dead man's heart, and shuddered. At the root of her shuddering was fear; there was neither pity nor repentance in her cruel, cat-like eyes. She looked away with a hang-dog look; and as

often as she did so, her eyes came back to the victim of her treachery.

As for Philip, in his heart, inefficient anger soon gave way to a flood of remorse. He had loved his uncle dearly; and the full truth burst upon him in a flood. Hot tears rose to his eyes, and streamed his cheeks.

Then they heard the sound of breaking brushwood, and presently Barco appeared, bearing on his shoulders the heavy burden he had carried throughout the past few days. He cast down the bundle in the light of the fire, and immediately the whole gang set upon it like a pack of wolves, fighting among themselves for loot.

The Eastern gipsy is like a wild beast in more ways than one. If by any chance a European strays into the gipsy quarter of one of the larger Turkish towns, he is at once surrounded by a swarm of men, women and children, who clutch at his clothes, clamour for piastres, and even attempt to steal his watch by force. And these are the gipsies living in the pale of civilisation, who are neither so wild nor so lawless as the nomad bands that roam the mountain slopes.

Philip watched the rifling of his uncle's belongings. His trouble was too great for him

to mind. These savage people, like starving wolverines, devoured the provisions, and then, from sheer wantonness, cast Sir Charles's note-books and papers into the fire—but, not until Barco had inspected them at leisure, and put one or two private letters into his pocket.

Whilst they were thus engaged, the snake girl found other, and more lucrative, employment. Unobserved by her companions, she went to the body of the murdered man, and took off the belt which encircled his waist, and which was loaded with English sovereigns. Next, she crossed to Philip, whom she relieved of a like burden.

She was then approached by Barco, who was the only one who had seen her rob the Europeans. The hammal spoke to her, and she laughed; and then, weighing the belts in either hand, she tossed Philip's to Barco, as the price of his silence. She had not been wrong in her estimate. Philip's belt contained about a hundred and fifty sovereigns and Sir Charles's little short of three times that amount.

And now, a consultation took place among the gipsies, the drift of which was painfully obvious to the sole spectator—the helpless Englishman, lashed to a tree. The excited

manner in which they talked, the frequent brandishing of knives, and fingers pointed at their prisoner, were fully as eloquent as language. The gipsy talks with gestures—a habit, no doubt, contracted in his wanderings to make himself intelligible to the peoples amongst whom he journeys.

They discussed among themselves what should be done with Philip. As usual, on such occasions, there were two parties—the one for extreme, and the other for moderate, measures. The former was led by Barco and the girl; the latter by a tall, lean man, with a face disfigured by a broken nose, who, as Philip had noticed, had taken no part in the plundering and the murder.

The tall man was for giving their prisoner his freedom. He indicated that the murder of *ghiaurs* was a serious matter in the eyes of such persons as ambassadors and consuls, of whom he appeared to have heard. By shrugs of the shoulders and frequent shakings of the head, he made it manifest, even to Philip, that he strongly disapproved of the whole affair.

The argument used by Barco and the snake girl was based upon the grim and undisputed maxim that "dead men tell no tales." Each

in turn laid stress upon the fact that to let the younger Englishman go free was but to place the noose around their necks, that they might swing from the gallows in Sofia. It will be seen that the tall man argued on the principle of what was right and wrong, whereas his opponents were prompted by fear. In such a gathering as this, in the craven hearts of a pack of Eastern gipsies, there could be no doubt as to which way the vote would go. It was with a shudder that Philip Thornton witnessed the conclusion of the debate which had actually doomed him to die.

Though it was quite apparent they had sentenced the Englishman to death, there was much uncertainty as to the manner in which that sentence should be carried out. Also, since no man in the world fears the Law more than the gipsy, no one seemed willing to undertake an office so hazardous.

Throughout those long-drawn minutes, the anguish endured by the prisoner was extreme. Since he was now gagged, he was unable to cry out; utterly helpless, left to make guesses at the meaning of the wild gesticulations of his captors, he awaited the end, the swift and inevitable conclusion at the point of the knife,

as a condemned prisoner awaits his doom. It would be hard to find in any quarter of the globe a group of men more savage-looking and villainous than this roaming gipsy band. It was vain to hope for mercy. Long since, were it not that they were cowards, the deed had been accomplished.

To await Death in patience is a sore trial to the stoutest heart. But profound sorrow causes us to become, to some degree at least, insensible to personal affliction, and even to pain. The intense grief he felt at the death of his beloved uncle so overclouded Philip Thornton's mind that he cared little whether he lived or died.

When the men appeared to hesitate, thrusting one another forward, and hiding behind their comrades, the snake girl braved them all. Throwing back her head, so that her green eyes flashed in the firelight, and brandishing her knife, she bade them lay bare the Englishman's heart that she might strike deep and true.

Barco approached, and unbuttoned Philip's shirt. All that can be said for the hammal is that he dared not look his master in the eyes. When Philip felt the warmth of the fire upon his naked chest, he closed his eyes for a moment,

and offered to the God who made him a swift and silent prayer. When he opened his eyes, he saw the girl approaching stealthily, her lips tight pressed, her cruel eyes fixed upon his, as a cat watches a wounded mouse, her long knife raised to strike.

We know of the terrible, magnetic force in the small eye of a viper, which draws twittering birds, from branch to branch, to the ground, to the very jaws of the destroyer. Something of that secret fascination now worked upon the young Englishman. He could not move his eyes from the girl. He felt paralysed in every limb. It did not seem that, even had he been free to do so, he had the power to move.

Nearer and nearer this ruthless, savage creature crept upon her victim. Then, at last, she fixed her gaze upon his heart, and lifted her hand even higher for the final stroke. She was no more than a yard from Philip. The knife quivered on high, as she raised herself upon her toes, and clenched her teeth, in order to strike home with all her force.

Philip could look at her no more. It was terrible to contemplate that human nature could sink to such unutterable depths. Again he closed his eyes, knowing full well that he had

not two seconds in which to live; and as he did so a shot rang out, sudden, sharp as the crack of a whip.

He saw the gipsy circle widen, like a ripple on the surface of a pool. The men fell back, stumbling in their haste. And in the centre, full in the firelight, the snake girl threw back her head with a shriek, and then fell writhing to the ground. She tried to lift herself, but sank with a groan. And then she twisted over on her side, and lay quite still.

Before then, there was a rapid burst of shots. Hot tongues of fire flashed from the darkness of the thickets on every side. The gipsies, panic-stricken and shouting to one another in their barbarous language, broke and fled in all directions, leaving three of their number on the ground. And before Philip could realise what had happened, or account for this unforeseen salvation at the eleventh hour, Boris Petroff had stepped into the firelight, a smoking revolver in his hand.

CHAPTER IV

THE THRESHOLD OF ADVENTURE

No sooner had Boris taken off the gag, and cut the ropes which bound the young Englishman to the tree, than Philip rushed to the body of his uncle. At a glance he saw that his worst fears were realised. Sir Charles Thornton had breathed his last. The sharp point of Barco's knife had entered into his heart; and death had been immediate. The snake girl had paid the price; but Barco had escaped. As Philip turned away, he was filled with but one desire: to avenge his uncle's death.

"Come!" he cried, seizing Boris by the arm. "After them—before they can get away!"

He was wildly excited. Had he had his own way, he would have hunted that gang of gipsies day and night, and week after week, until he had scoured the mountains, from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. But, Petroff, instead of sharing the Englishman's enthusiasm, only shook his head. He knew the land of his birth.

"It would be worse than useless," said he. "We could never hope to find them. These people know of caves where they can remain in hiding for weeks. They can travel miles by night, by unknown bridle-paths. Do you know who it was that killed your uncle?"

"Yes," said Philip, with a choke in his voice which he was quite unable to repress. "It was Barco, our hammal, the man we engaged in Sofia."

Boris shrugged his shoulders.

"I never liked the look of him," said he. "I mistrusted the fellow from the first. However, I did not think it would come to this, though I certainly feared for your safety."

For the first time, Philip looked about him. Hitherto, his mind had been obsessed by one overwhelming idea—the shock he had sustained in the sudden death of his uncle. He now took stock of the four men who accompanied the young Bulgarian, and who had appeared so providentially on the site of the gipsy encampment at the moment when the prisoner stood face to face with death.

These were Bulgarian peasants of the poorer sort: and though they no longer wore their gala costumes, Philip had no difficulty in recog-

nising them as four of the men who had taken part in the dancing of the hora, two days before. He looked at them bewildered, and then turned to Boris. He was not yet sure in his mind that the whole affair was nothing but a dream.

"What made you come here?" he asked.

Boris smiled—the grim smile of one who stands in the presence of death.

"Were it not that my actions have been justified," said he, "you would laugh at the reason. You English are so matter of fact: we Bulgars are superstitious; it is in our nature to be so. The words of that old witch haunted me; they were like a nightmare. She prophesied the death of your uncle. Now, I have heard of too many incidents proving the wisdom of the gipsies in this matter of fortune-telling, to scoff at what they say. I liked your uncle. All last night I lay awake, and thought of him and you. And this morning, I could stand it no longer. Asking these good fellows to bear me company, I set off upon your tracks. This evening, soon after darkness had fallen, we gave up all hope of finding you to-night. Then, we heard shots—three I think. They sounded about three-quarters of a mile distant. We pushed on in all haste, and arrived here, too

late to save your uncle, but in the nick of time as far as you were concerned."

There was something so simple and direct in the way the young Bulgarian had told his story, that the weight of gratitude was added to that of sorrow, and Philip Thornton's heart was heavy indeed. He held out his hand, and Boris took it.

"I owe my life to you," he said, in a voice that was hoarse. "I can never thank you sufficiently."

"I do not ask for thanks," said the other. "Besides, you have something else to think of."

"I know what you mean," said Philip. "But, what chance have I of ever meeting the scoundrel again? Your country is large; Turkey is large. It may be that he will fly even to Asia."

"The gipsy came from Asia," said Boris; "he will not go back. I know something of the ways of gipsies, and will help you all I can. He will hide in one of the larger towns; the *mahallahs* are safer than the hills. You have money, and a bribe can carry far. I believe in my heart that you will bring this man to justice."

"I will do my best," said Philip.

At that, the Bulgarian's face lit up. He grasped the Englishman by the arm.

"Don't you remember," said he, "have you forgotten the old hag's words: a long night, a long search, and at the end—a dark, moving grave! What that means I cannot say; but, I am sure she spoke the truth. You may set your mind at rest."

They had spoken together in Turkish. The Balkan Peninsula is a land of many tongues; but to the traveller in that region, Turkish is the language of the greatest value, since formerly it was spoken throughout the length and breadth of the whole country, from the Danube to the Morea.

Philip Thornton had a natural aptitude for languages, and was already able to converse in Turkish with some degree of fluency. Though his pronunciation was, as yet, far from perfect, he knew enough to recognise that the Bulgarian lieutenant spoke it as well as if it had been his mother tongue. Though Turkish is spoken by many Bulgarians, there are few whose pronunciation is faultless in Moslem ears. Mention of this may seem a detail of small importance, but in the pages that follow it will be found that this fact may be compared to a pivot

upon which the whole of the present story swings.

Over the scene that now ensued, we think it best to draw a veil. It has been a custom among all peoples, since time immemorial, to screen the face of death. By the dying embers of the gipsy fire they dug two graves: the one for the three gipsies and the girl, and the other for Sir Charles Thornton. When all was finished, Philip knelt down and prayed from out of the depths of his heart. Boris and the four peasants stood bareheaded, with lowered faces, and never moved till the Englishman rose to his feet. Then they set off together through the forest, whilst the wind rose from the north, and blew cold in their faces from across the great wastes of Russia.

Far into the night they travelled. Philip had no desire to rest. With such a load of bitterness upon his soul, he was incapable of fatigue. As for the Bulgarians, they were men of the mountains with the strength of gods and sinews as of steel.

"Where are we going?" asked Philip, after they had been walking several hours.

"I know of a village in the valley yonder," said Boris, pointing to the north. "We will

rest there for a few hours. To-morrow, I will take you to Sofia. I must return to my regiment, for my furlough is up; and I do not like to leave you alone. I hope you will be my guest for a little while. We are friends, you and I."

Philip expressed his appreciation of the young man's kindness. The more he saw of Boris Petroff, the more he liked him.

"I shall be absent during the day," the lieutenant ran on. "We have an officers' club in Sofia, but we live in lodgings in the town. I am very comfortable, because my sister keeps house for me, whereas most of my comrades have to fend for themselves."

He went on to speak of the Bulgarian army, saying how the regiments were working day and night in order to be strong enough to challenge their oppressor, the Turk, Philip's share of the conversation being confined to an occasional question. At length, the first signs of daybreak were visible in the east; and soon after, they came to the village where Boris intended they should rest.

Here they were received with hospitality in the house of an old man who had known the lieutenant for many years. Philip himself had no inclination to eat; but the Bulgarians had

the appetites of lions, and it was not long before they had cleared the larder of everything their host could find. Then, side by side, Philip and Boris lay down in their clothes upon a bed, and soon were fast asleep. As for the peasants, they slept as well upon the floor, each one with his rifle near at hand. They were men who lived their lives in troublous times, when Death was ever near at hand, and they might be called to arms at any moment. Scenes such as that which had taken place that night were nothing new to them. Over the frontier lay the undefined territory of "Macedonia"—the word that had only to be spoken in a whisper in Sofia to call forth vows of vengeance against the Turk and expressions of impatience for the hour when the Sword of Deliverance should strike.

Soon after ten o'clock, Philip Thornton awoke to find his companions still asleep. He went downstairs, and found their host, who persuaded him to take some food. He was not yet himself; he was still shaken by the terrible experience of the preceding evening; but even a few hours' sleep had done much to restore him to the full possession of his faculties. Whilst he was eating, Boris appeared, followed by the four

peasants, who, despite the great meal they had had at daybreak, protested that they were hungry.

Philip was informed that they were only five miles from a railway station where they could catch a train to Sofia in the early afternoon. The peasants had decided to return that day to their homes; and before they departed, Philip asked Boris whether he might reward these men for having saved his life.

"There is no need," said Boris, with a shrug. "However, they will like it if you do. They are very poor, these people. They would be grateful for even a few centimes."

Philip gave them a great deal more than that. He had now his uncle's money-belt which had been taken from the body of the girl; and the amazement and delight upon the faces of those simple Bulgar peasants may be imagined, when each found himself the proud possessor of five golden English sovereigns. Not one of them had ever beheld so much wealth in all his life.

Soon after the peasants had gone their way, the two friends walked along a twisting road, which was no more than a cart-track on a valley-side, until they came to a small station on the line which runs from Kustendil to Sofia.

The train was exceedingly late, and the afternoon was well advanced when they found themselves in the capital of the Kingdom of Bulgaria.

Sofia is essentially a modern town. Within the last thirty years, the city has been rebuilt upon the site of an old Turkish village, of which only the white mosque remains with its tall, slender minarets rising above the roofs of the white, plaster houses, many of which are only one story high.

The railway station is situated some distance from the town; and as they walked towards the city, Boris sang the praises of Sofia. As they passed through streets, traversed by electric tramcars, the lieutenant pointed out many of the principal buildings. Presently, they crossed the square, in the centre of which was a garden where the trees were breaking into leaf. Here also were the Royal Palace, the Town Hall, and the War Office. Petroff's lodgings were situated in the vicinity of the Sobranye, or the Parliament House, before which stood a most imposing statue of Alexander the Second.

No sooner had Boris knocked upon the door of the house where he lodged than it was flung open by a girl who clapped her hands together

when she saw him and gave vent to a cry of delight. Boris presented the young Englishman to his sister, and all three went into a little sitting-room on the right of the passage, where there was much, indeed, to be said.

First, she must hear news of her father. And then, Boris had to tell the story of the murder of Sir Charles Thornton, and of how he had brought Philip to Sofia. Though Alma Petroff was obliged to talk to Philip in French —a language in which neither was very proficient—her manner was so frank, and her actions so graceful, that the young Englishman thought her charming from the first.

The women of Bulgaria are not, as a rule, pretty. Their round faces, with high cheek-bones and parchment-coloured skins, betoken their Tartar descent. Alma, however, was one of the exceptions that go to prove the rule. Her features were smaller and more regular than those of the majority of her race, and she had a smile that was even beautiful.

At that time, her whole life was centred in her brother, though she saw little enough of him in all conscience. Boris rose daily soon after dawn, and went to his duties at the barracks. At midday, he lunched at the officers'

club, and frequently did not get away until as late as six o'clock in the afternoon. The evenings he devoted to his sister; and they invariably dined in a café where there was music, and where they met their friends.

Neither was Alma idle throughout the day. All Bulgaria works for its living. A great deal of her time was taken up in giving music lessons. When she had many pupils, they dined at the Hotel de Bulgarie, or some fashionable restaurant. But sometimes she had no pupils at all, and then it was their custom to go to one of the cheaper cafés in a poorer part of the town.

For many weeks Philip Thornton remained in Sofia. Putting himself in communication with his friends and relations in England, he decided to forfeit the advantages of a university career, and to remain in Bulgaria in order to endeavour to bring the murderer of his uncle to justice. With this end in view he worked with the greatest perseverance, for several hours a day, at mastering the difficulties of the Turkish language. He could not forget that tragic scene in the forest. He felt that he could not rest until the crime had been avenged. Across the border, he could never hope to succeed in

his quest for Barco, until he could speak Turkish with fluency and ease. Also, if the truth be told, there was another reason that induced him to remain in Sofia. Alma Petroff was fast becoming more and more to him as the days went by.

One evening, when the summer was at its height, and the nights were warm, the three friends were seated in a café in one of the principal streets. In this café was an orchestra of five musicians who, though they were disguised in frock-coats and clean collars, were gipsies, none the less.

These men played divinely, without music, trusting solely to memory and to ear. They had played many popular airs from Paris and Vienna when, presently, of their own accord, they struck up one of their own gipsy horas, which have no resemblance to any other music in the world.

They were in the middle of this when Philip sprang suddenly to his feet. His face was white; his lips were parted; and both Alma and her brother saw that his hands were shaking. The orchestra was playing the same song that the snake girl had sung, on the night they killed his uncle.

He remained on his feet for no longer than

an instant. Then, resuming his seat, he rested his chin upon his hand. When the melody was finished, he spoke in a voice that was husky. "To-morrow," said he, "I go."

Boris smiled, as if he understood.

"It is well," said he, and then went on, "I am sorry we must part, for we are friends. Still, it is well. I also must go. Duty calls me. A great future lies before Bulgaria."

"Where must you go?" asked Philip.

"I cannot say," said Boris, with a shake of the head. "However, I will tell you this: to-day, I was at the War Office, where I received certain instructions from a high official. 'Petroff,' he said, 'the iron is hot. Bulgaria is indebted to private enterprise in London for the very sinews of war. You may go about your business.'"

"What business?"

"That is a secret," said Boris. "Even my sister does not know.

Alma, whose face had been lowered, looked up and smiled.

"With us," she said, "Bulgaria is first."

As they left the café, Philip felt—though he could not have explained it at the time—that they stood upon the threshold of adventure.

CHAPTER V

YILDIRIM BEY

THE following day, Philip, with Adrianople as his destination, left Sofia by the Oriental Express, the train which runs from Vienna to Constantinople. For some weeks past he had been mindful of his uncle's last request—that he should visit Yildirim Bey. He had been told that Yildirim was one of the most capable and brilliant men in Turkey, and that he would have no difficulty in finding him in Adrianople.

No sooner had Philip arrived in the great Turkish fortress, and deposited the little luggage he possessed in the only European hotel of which the city could boast, than he was directed by the hall porter to the residence of Yildirim Bey. There, to his disappointment, he was informed that the Bey had left Adrianople only the day before, on a tour of inspection of the neighbouring forts, and that he was not expected to return for, at least, a fortnight.

It was, indeed, three weeks before Philip received an answer to the note he left at the

house. The Bey, who had returned that afternoon, said he would be delighted to see Sir Charles Thornton's nephew, if he would be so good as to call that afternoon.

Yildirim proved to be a man of about forty-five years of age. His dark hair was slightly touched with grey. He was tall even for a Turk, with a firm chin, a long, black moustache, and black brows, low-set upon a pair of eyes that seemed to look you through and through. He was dressed in khaki uniform, with well-polished riding-boots and spurs; and on his left breast was a string of medals and decorations. He greeted Philip with the cordiality and courtesy of a Turkish gentleman, who, not without reason, prides himself upon his good manners and politeness.

"I can hardly tell you," said he, "how distressed I was to hear of the death of your uncle. It was a public calamity."

"He was a well-known man in England," said Philip. "There is no one to take his place."

"You misunderstand me," said the Turk. "I mean a public calamity—for Turkey."

"For Turkey?"

"Yes. Sir Charles Thornton was my only hope. There is no man in Europe to whom I

have spoken so openly. He asked you to see me, did he not?"

Philip bowed assent.

"Very well, then," said Yildirim; "I may be frank. I can trust you, I know. That which I have to tell you is a secret."

Here Philip interposed.

"A moment," said he. "I must remind you that my friends—two of the best friends I have in the world—are Bulgarians. If this secret is concerned with the quarrel that exists between Bulgaria and Turkey, I should prefer not to hear it."

Yildirim Bey smiled, and puffed the smoke of his cigarette into the air.

"Your uncle," said he, "was a good friend to Turkey."

"I know he was," said Philip. "He had the greatest respect for your nation."

"And you have no wish to carry on your uncle's work?" asked Yildirim. "It was good work; I can assure you of that."

Philip blushed scarlet. He was conscious of a reproach.

"I feel it my duty," said he, "to do as my uncle would have wished."

Yildirim smiled again—a kindly smile.

"We can be friends," said he, as if he was sure of it. "You will not be so foolish as to think that because some of your friends are Bulgarians, another may not be a Turk. I will tell you the whole story from the start. It will be sufficient for me if you give me your word of honour as an English gentleman that no word of this shall ever pass your lips. It would have been your uncle's wish."

Philip gave his word without hesitation. He little dreamed of the part he was destined to play in the stormy weeks to follow. He little thought that the time would some day come when he would be ashamed to look this gallant soldier in the face. Yildirim Bey lit another cigarette, rose to his feet, and closed the door. Then, sitting back in his chair, he sent rings of smoke towards the ceiling.

"Have you ever heard of the Balkan League?" he asked.

Philip shook his head.

"It is no secret," said Yildirim. "The term is familiar to the diplomats of Europe. Few people, however, regard the matter seriously. Bulgaria, Servia, Montenegro and Greece have formed an alliance against Turkey. They only bide their time to rise in arms."

"In Bulgaria," said Philip, "they talk as if war were certain."

Yildirim laughed. "They have talked like that for years," said he; "and nothing has come of it. But, at last, they have set to work in earnest. This is known in Constantinople, but nobody cares. Our diplomats, even our generals, despise the Balkan States. We have conquered them in the past, and they believe that we can conquer them in the future. They snap their fingers at the League. I know better. I see my country as it is. Valour! You will find the same valour in Turkey to-day as when our ancestors drove the Greeks from the walls of Constantinople, six hundred years ago. Our soldiers will fight as they have always fought, with courage unsurpassed by any soldiers in the world. Still, for all that, we are not prepared to face this Balkan League. Everywhere is corruption, want of organisation, inefficiency. Our regular troops are well drilled, well armed and well disciplined; but the *redifs*, the reservists, are useless. They are not properly trained, they cannot shoot, they are without discipline; hence, they are not to be relied upon. If I were to say this to the officials in Constantinople, I should be laughed at—as, indeed,

I have been laughed at, already. If I—a soldier—were to tell this to the people, I should be stoned to death. No one would believe me. It is only because I have spoken too openly already that I have not been promoted to higher rank in the army. Who knows? Perhaps, I am looked upon as a coward."

He ceased speaking, got to his feet, and paced to and fro in the room. As Philip Thornton watched him, he thought it impossible to imagine that this man, with his handsome face and flashing eye, was not one of the bravest of the brave. After a while, he came back to his chair, and went on with his story at the point where he had ceased abruptly.

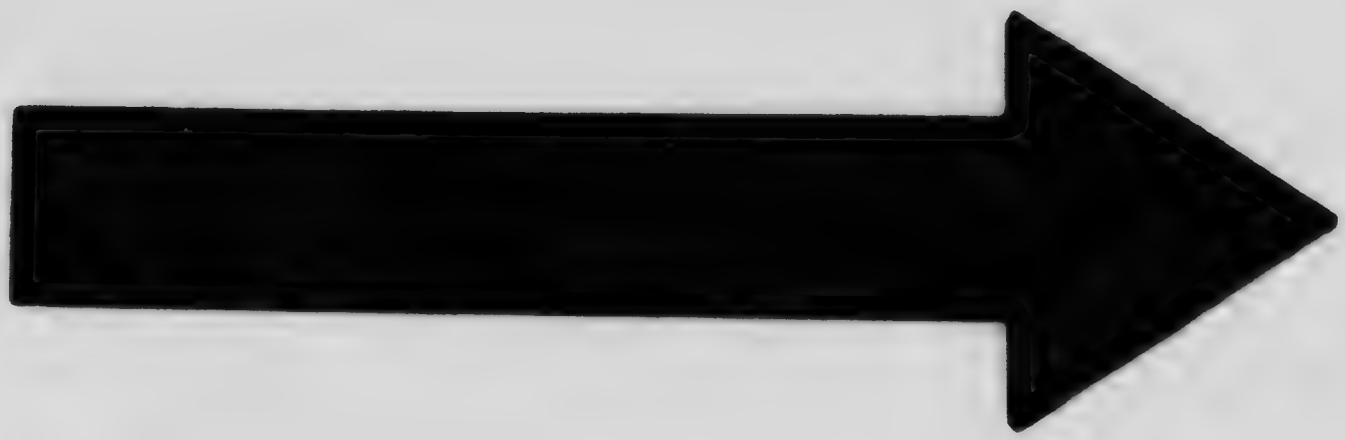
"If the Turkish army were well organised and well equipped," said he, "we should have nothing to fear from the Balkan League. Man for man, the Ottoman is still a match for the Bulgar or the Serb. As for the Greek, we would wipe him off the face of the earth, as we did in '97." He made a sweeping gesture of the arm which was superb. "Still, if—as some think—this war comes in this autumn, I fear for my beloved country. I desire to delay matters. Indeed, some delay is very necessary, for the simple reason that Turkey is not prepared to

fight. I had one hope: and that hope was dependent upon your uncle.

"You must know that war costs money, and Bulgaria is poor. For some time, they have been looking about for money; and recently, they have gone to a certain English millionaire whom it is not necessary to mention by name. I know your country well. At one time I was military attaché at the Turkish Embassy in London. A certain gentleman who lives in Park Lane, and who already has more wealth than he can spend, desires to increase his fortune by plunging five nations into war. Through the medium of your uncle, Sir Charles Thornton, I could have put a stop to this. Your uncle had many influential friends in London, including a cabinet minister. In order to avert war, he intended to bring pressure to bear upon this financier."

"I remember," said Philip, "he was anxious to return to England without delay."

"That was the reason," said Yildirim. "Now, I have here a letter which your uncle wrote me from Sofia, shortly before his death. He had taken the trouble to put himself into communication with the members of the Chinese Government. During my absence of the last



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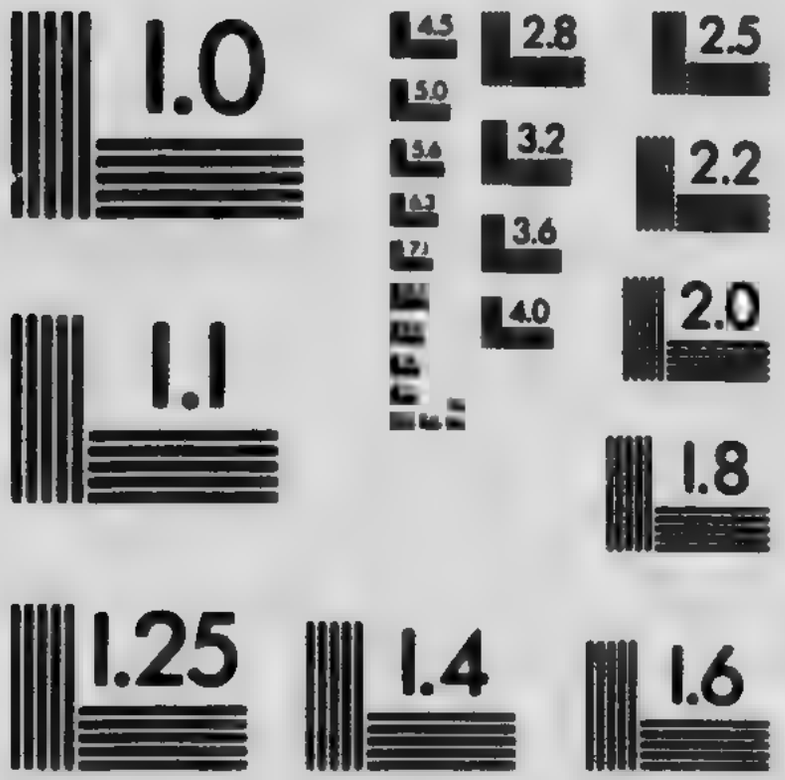

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few days, a letter arrived for your uncle, addressed to him here—at my house. Here is the letter in question. I propose to open it in your presence, since already I happen to know its contents."

So saying, Yildirim Bey drew a long, official envelope from his pocket, and broke the seal. It was written in French — the diplomatic language of the world, and signed by the Chinese Minister for Foreign affairs. It was a request for a loan, at a higher rate of interest, and with far better security, than anything that could have been guaranteed by the little, poverty-stricken kingdom of Bulgaria.

"What is it that you propose that I should do?" asked Philip, when he had read the letter.

"I suggest," said Yildirim, "that you return immediately to England; that you make a point of seeing your uncle's friend, the cabinet minister. He will be anxious to avert war; and no doubt, with his great influence and commanding personality, he will have no difficulty in deflecting this sum of money from Bulgaria to China. That is how you can serve me."

Philip rose to his feet.

"In the cause of humanity," said he, "I

would be only too glad to do my utmost. But I fear it is too late."

Yildirim looked up, and lifted his eyebrows.

"Already?" he asked.

Philip bowed his head.

"I am able to understand now," he said, "certain things that were told me in Sofia. I heard it said that 'the iron was hot,' that 'Bulgaria was indebted to private persons in London for the very sinews of war.'"

Yildirim turned away with a shrug.

"Kismet!" said he. "The will of God be done."

At that, he raised his cup of coffee, and lit another cigarette. He had seen his hopes shattered at a single blow. He was one of the few men in the whole Turkish Empire who recognised the danger in which his nation stood. And all he did was to murmur, "Kismet," and send his smoke into the air. Which proved him an Oriental in his heart.

Soon afterwards, he wished the young Englishman good-bye. There was nothing, either in his voice or manner, to suggest a man who had suffered a severe and bitter disappointment.

When Philip got out into the street, he was surprised to find that it was approaching sunset.

He had been longer with the Bey than he thought. As he walked through the narrow, squalid streets, so crowded with people that in places he was forced to elbow his way through the crowd, he was filled with admiration for the man with whom he had been speaking. In every way, Yildirim was a true descendant of the invincible Ottoman Turk of the days of old. In the presence of such a man it was possible to understand something of the former greatness of his nation.

Philip had moved to a house in the Frankish settlement, in the vicinity of the railway station, which lay some little distance from the native city. To reach this, it was necessary to pass over the bridge across the Maritza, on the southern side of the town.

Shortly before he reached this bridge, he noticed an old Turk, with a grey beard, and exceedingly bent in the back, who was walking the same way as himself, with steps painfully slow. He was one of the peasant class, in all probability a farmer, very poorly clad, and despite his advanced age, carrying upon his shoulder an immense bundle, the weight of which sometimes caused him to stagger.

Philip was inclined to offer his services to

the old fellow, to volunteer to carry his load across the bridge. If he did not do so, it was because at that moment, from the minaret of an adjacent mosque the voice of a *muezzin* called all good Mohammedans to prayer, and the old man immediately went down upon his knees and bowed his face to the east. As Philip passed, the old Turk was giving thanks to Allah for the mercies of the day that was gone.

It was rapidly growing dark by the time Philip reached the bridge, where a small toll had to be paid, and where a beggar was seated at the roadside. Philip passed quite near to this man, and as he did so, looked down into his face. There was just sufficient light to enable him to see the man's features clearly.

Philip Thornton stopped dead, as if he had been struck. He had seen the man before. For an instant, he could not remember where; and then, the truth came upon him in a flash. The beggar was tall and thin, with a broken nose, and a great scar across his cheek. Moreover, he was a gipsy.

The scene in the forest arose before the young man's eyes. He saw himself bound to the tree, and Barco and the snake girl haggling for his life; and this was the self-same man who had

lifted his voice that the Englishman might be spared.

As Philip moved towards him, to speak to him, a look of recognition came suddenly upon the man's face, and with a cry of terror, he sprang to his feet, and set off running down the road.

Philip made after him, as fast as he could go. He was surprised to find how swiftly the gipsy could run. Those who live in the open air, who roam from one country to another, sleeping beneath the stars, are as agile as the wild beasts of the forest and the mountain-side.

Presently, the gipsy turned from the road, and made off across country to the west, in the direction of the hills which are crowned by the forts on the right bank of the Arda.

Philip had already made his plans. The gipsy might be able to tell him something concerning the whereabouts of Barco. He would take Boris's advice and trust to a bribe. But, before he could try the effects of a bribe, it was first necessary to overtake the runner, which, for the present, there seemed little chance of doing. In fact, the gipsy was gaining ground at every stride, by reason of the fact that he was barefooted, whereas Philip's progress was

much impeded by the heavy boots he found it necessary to wear in a country where the roads are quagmires when it rains. Indeed, it looked as if the gipsy was certain to escape.

In desperation, Philip cried out to him to stop; but the louder he cried, the faster the fellow ran. Presently, Philip was obliged to pause for breath, and immediately, he became aware of the sound of footsteps behind him. Turning, he beheld to his astonishment the old Turk whom he had passed upon the road, and who was also giving chase.

It was no time then for questions. Seeing that there was new hope of running the fugitive down, once more Philip went forward in pursuit. It did not occur to him that what he beheld was little short of a miracle; for the old Turk had thrown aside his bundle, and, his grey beard flying and his fists clenched, was running fully as fast as the gipsy. Had this phenomenon occurred in daylight, no doubt a crowd had collected, and many people joined in the chase. As it was, it was already dark, and they were some distance from the city, in a lonely part of the country; so that this petty drama was acted to its finish with no spectator but the moon.

The Turk, who was running about twenty yards to the left of Philip, was the first to overtake the gipsy, who turned sharply to his right. This brought the fugitive to within easy reach of the Englishman, who had not been captain of his school at football without being able to tackle a man in the open. Philip, seizing the man by the knees, brought him down upon the ground; but the fellow, who was like a cat, was on his feet again in an instant. There followed a breathless race for about a hundred yards, at the end of which the gipsy was brought to a standstill. He had reached the railway line, to find himself confronted by a cutting, about sixty feet in depth, which it was impossible to cross.

Turning, he faced his adversaries, and then, deciding that the old man would prove the simpler task, he whipped a knife from his w and hurled himself upon the Turk.

Beyond doubt, the man was quite possessed with fear, and imagined that the Englishman intended to bring him to the gallows; else, he would not have resorted to such desperate means of effecting his escape. The blade of his knife flashed in the moonlight, as he struck a blow at the old man which had gone deep into his

victim's heart, had not his wrist been nimbly caught and held in a grasp of steel.

Before Philip could intervene, a struggle took place, as brief as it was fierce. The Turk seemed possessed of the strength of Hercules. The gipsy imagined that he was fighting for his life. Unable to free his right hand from the grasp of a man who was several inches shorter than himself, with his left he seized the Turk by the beard and hurled his weight upon his opponent's chest. They came down together with a thud upon the ground, and then rolled over and over.

It was at this juncture that Philip arrived upon the scene. By reason of the darkness, and because the two men were so locked together in each other's arms, he found it difficult to distinguish one from the other. A moment since, the moon had disappeared behind a cloud.

Anxious to render help to the man who, for some mysterious reason, had come so opportunely to his aid, Philip flung his weight upon the two struggling forms. He was then able to distinguish the white hair of the Turk, and with both hands he grasped the gipsy by the throat, and held him fast.

The gipsy made one wild, spasmodic effort to escape. Somehow, he managed to lift both his opponents bodily into the air. The effort was no more than the final kick of a landed fish. The Englishman never relaxed his grasp; and all three came down again, the gipsy underneath. And thereupon, Philip experienced the peculiar sensation of one leg swinging wide in space, the foot of which failed to find the ground. In an instant, he was back again on terra firma. It may have been that the gipsy had now expended his strength, or perhaps he had some reason to be frightened; at any rate, he lay quite still for a moment; and it was then that Philip pulled out his revolver and thrust the cold muzzle between the man's staring eyes.

"Mercy!" cried the fellow in a shriek.

He had said the word in Turkish, and it was in that language that Philip answered.

"Lie still," said he. "You have nothing to fear."

The man obeyed, rigid as a mummy; and Philip got to his feet, took off a scarf he was wearing round his neck, and tied the man's elbows together behind his back. He then looked about him, with the intention of thanking the Turk, who, he found to his amazement,

was nowhere to be seen. The old man had vanished, as suddenly and as unaccountably as if he had disappeared from off the face of the earth.

It was at that moment that the moon came out from behind the cloud which had masked its face throughout the last few seconds, and then it was that the mystery was solved. They had been struggling on the top of the railway cutting—and the Turk had gone over the edge.

Something white lay at Philip's feet. He stooped and picked it up. Wonder of wonders, it was the old man's beard!

He went to the brink of the cutting, and shouted at the full power of his lungs.

"Are you there?" he cried.

"Yes," came the answer in a voice no less lusty than his own.

"Are you hurt?"

"I am bruised," said the voice from out of the darkness; "but, I think, no bones are broken. Allah be praised! I had the good fortune to be caught in a bush which broke my fall. Wait there. I will come to you in a moment."

He heard footsteps at the bottom of the cutting, and then the sound of someone climbing

up to the right, where, doubtless, the slope was not so steep. Presently, he saw the Turk's white clothes in the moonlight. He struck a match; and no sooner had he done so than the Turk, without apology, blew it out.

The whole of this affair was like a box of puzzles, inasmuch as no solution to a string of mysteries could be found. It seemed to Philip fully as fantastic as any chapter in all the Arabian Nights. The aged Turk, who ran like a deer, who was possessed of prodigious physical strength, and who had the ability to shed his beard as a viper casts its skin, was another genie, or jinn—the kind of super-man who, according to oriental legend, ruled on earth before the creation of Adam. At this moment, he tapped Philip on the shoulder, and whispered in his ear.

"I have no wish," said he, pointing to the gipsy, "for that fellow to see me without my beard. It might lead to complications."

Philip looked into his face, which he had turned towards the moon. It was the face of Boris Petroff.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPY

"Boris!" cried Philip. "Whatever are you doing here?"

The Bulgarian carried a finger to his lips, and glanced in the direction of the gipsy.

"Be careful," said he. "If I am discovered, you know what it means."

As yet, Philip had hardly had time to grasp the full facts of the case. The truth dawned upon him by degrees.

"You are a spy!" he uttered in a whisper.

"It comes to that," said the other. "I know I have nothing to fear from you. I have been here a week, selling pumpkins to the soldiers in the forts between the Tunja and the Baba Eski Road. I have managed to find out a good deal concerning the garrisons and the number and nature of the guns. But, we have no time to waste; you must get this fellow out of the way. A bribe will be necessary, but that will not be enough in itself; you must threaten him with instant death, if he

speaks to anyone of what has happened to-night. I leave that matter to you. When you have got rid of him, return to me here."

Philip stepped across to the gipsy, who, having his arms bound behind his back, and knowing that the Englishman was armed with a revolver, had feared to endeavour to escape. The man spoke very little Turkish, and such words as he knew he grossly mispronounced. Hence, not only did it take time for Philip to make himself understood, but a considerable amount of patience was necessary.

"I want to tell you," said he, "that you have been extremely foolish. I never meant to harm you from the first. You remember who I am?"

"I remember very well," said the other, with a guilty look. "Effendi, I had nothing to do with the murder. I swear to you, I tried to persuade Barco and the girl not to commit the crime."

"I know that well enough," said Philip. "That is why you have nothing to fear. Now, pay attention to what I am about to say, and remember my words. It will go ill with you if you forget."

At this, the man seemed to gather a certain

amount of courage, for he looked up, though he could not take his eyes from Philip's revolver.

"You may be able to tell me," the young Englishman went on, "where Barco is hiding. You understand, in all countries it is a crime to shield a criminal. It is therefore your duty to tell me, apart from the fact that I have made it my business to find out the truth. If you lie to me, I will kill you. If you speak the truth, I will give you five pounds in English money now, and five pounds when Barco has been brought to justice. Do you agree to that, or do you not?"

The man eagerly answered that he did.

"Very well, then," said Philip. "Where is Barco to be found?"

The gipsy leaned forward, bringing his mouth close to Philip's ear. In the moonlight, his grim, disfigured countenance was certainly not prepossessing.

"Barco," he whispered, "is in this very city, in Adrianople. He goes frequently to a café, called the "Café of the Five Nations," kept by a Syrian, whose name is Haji Bagdadi. He seldom comes into the gipsy mahallah. He is a rich man, nowadays. He has forgotten his

old friends, because of the money he stole from the Englishman's belt."

"*My* belt," said Philip.

"The effendi speaks the truth."

"There are the five pounds I promised you," said Philip, freeing the man's arms, and giving him the money. "But, wait; I have not yet done."

The man's eyes gloated on the money. So overcome was he by the sight of it that he began to tremble in his limbs. He was half terrified, half pleased.

"There is something else," said Philip, "of greater importance still. You are to forget everything that has happened to-night. Here are two more sovereigns to seal your lips. If you tell a single living soul you were pursued and captured by a Turk, your life will be in danger. You understand, we live in the midst of great events. There are those who would not hesitate to put you out of the world. For your own sake, I advise you to hold your tongue."

The man now looked frightened again.

"Effendi," said he, "I swear it."

"I ask you to swear nothing," said Philip. "If all goes well, I will pay you another five

pounds. If this project fails through any fault of yours, you die."

"Effendi," he repeated, "I swear it."

"Then, get off," said Philip, "as quickly as you can."

The man disappeared in the darkness. The last Philip saw of him he was running in the moonlight towards the river. No sooner was he gone than Boris Petroff appeared at Philip's side.

"You managed it well," said he, "I listened to every word."

The spy stooped down, and picked up his false beard, which was lying at their feet. "It will take some time to make this right," said he. "The man was desperate. Had it been my own hair, he would have pulled it out by the roots."

"You heard about Barco?" asked Philip.

"Yes," said the other. "What do you mean to do?"

"I propose to take a leaf from your book," said Philip; "to disguise myself as a Turk, and to go to this Haji Bagdadi's café."

"Bravo!" cried Boris, with a laugh. "So there will be two of us playing the spy. But I can assist you. In the bazaar in the principal

street, nearest the Ottoman Bank, you will find a Greek barber, a man of the name of Velian. He is absolutely to be trusted, if you pay him well. He will give you everything that is necessary to disguise yourself, and if you follow his instructions, you ought to be pretty safe; for, I tell you frankly, I think your job will prove more dangerous than mine. I know the Café of the Five Nations. It is frequented by the biggest scoundrels in the place. By a strange coincidence I myself had already decided to go there. You must not recognise me, of course; but in the heart of a city like this, it is just as well to have a friend at hand. You speak Turkish well enough to pass; but, be careful. If the gipsies find you out, they will make short work of you; you may depend upon that."

Thereupon, they parted, Boris going towards the railway station where he was to meet a train upon which was a brother spy who would carry his dispatches to Sofia, and Philip towards the Frankish settlement, a little farther to the north.

Two days later, Philip Thornton left Adrianople by a train which went to the west. Taking a ticket to Mustafa Pasha, he reserved a first-class carriage for himself.

As soon as the train was clear of the station, he pulled down the blinds, in order that no one passing down the corridor might see what he was about. He then undressed, tied his clothes in a bundle, which he weighted with heavy stones, and threw out of the window into a river as the train passed over a bridge. As the bundle sank beneath the water, Philip realised that, for the time being, he had cut himself off completely from the civilisation of the West.

He then produced a bottle containing a brown fluid, which he had obtained from Velian, and with which he stained his skin to the colour of walnut, so that his complexion resembled that of an inhabitant of one of the mountainous regions of Asia Minor. Acting on the advice of Velian, Philip had purchased the clothes of a Kizilbashi from Angora. Among the people of that district, who are probably purely Turkish in origin, the Turkish language is generally spoken. The Kizilbashis, or "Redheads," as they are called, are superior to the ordinary Turk in intelligence; and Philip's features were so formed that, according to the Greek, he would have no difficulty in passing himself off as a horse-dealer who raised his stock on the fertile plains of the upper valley of the Kizil

Irmah, which, in classic times, under the name of the Halys, was one of the most notable rivers in the world.

From the train, into which a young English gentleman had stepped at Adrianople, there appeared upon the platform at Mustafa Pasha a somewhat wild-looking, Anatolian horse-dealer, with a battered fez, and no more luggage than a couple of bridles and a blanket.

This young man betook himself into the town, where, that very evening, he purchased two horses, a supply of provisions, and a saddle. The following morning, he set off to the south, riding one horse, and leading the other, and by midday had returned to Adrianople.

As he entered the city by the western road, he observed a group of soldiers on the glacis of the fort which stands upon the high hill at the apex of the Maritza and the Tunja Rivers. These men appeared wildly excited, and from time to time, they cheered. As the horse-dealer passed towards the city, he noticed an old Turk, with a basketful of pumpkins, walking slowly towards the soldiers and the fort. So Boris Petroff, with his life in his hands, still went about his business.

In the city the streets were thronged. The

whole population seemed to be abroad. Veiled women passed with noiseless feet upon their way. Urchins, with little or no clothing, chased one another around great heaps of refuse in open places. At almost every corner beggars asked for alms, and received them; for has not the Prophet written that charity is among the greatest of the virtues?

Men of every nationality and race conversed in groups in the narrow streets, in the bazaars and on the steps of the mosques. They spoke in loud voices, and, as often as not, emphasized their meaning with wild gesticulations.

Philip had dismounted, and was leading his horses through the streets at a walk. He was about to inquire the reason for this unwonted excitement, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and heard the word, "*Dur!*" (Halt!) spoken in the gruff tones of a word of command.

He turned, and found that he had been arrested by a zaptieh, or gendarme.

"Where are you going?" demanded the man.

Philip answered that he was a horse-dealer, a Kizilbashi from Angora, who had come to sell his horses in Adrianople. At the present

moment, he was on his way to the Café of the Five Nations, where, he had been told, excellent accommodation was to be had.

"If you came here to sell your horses," said the zaptieh, "they are as good as sold already. Be so good as to follow me."

Now, in Turkey, it is not wise to resist the police. These fellows are armed, and do not hesitate to use their weapons. Philip, leading his horses, accompanied the gendarme down a side street which was so narrow that there was barely room for the two horses to walk abreast.

"Tell me," said he to the man, "what is this all about? I have not the least idea."

"Do you mean to say you have not heard!" exclaimed the zaptieh. "The Montenegrins have declared war. There has been fighting on the frontier. The mobilisation of the army proceeds apace. The Government requires horses for the cavalry and artillery; oxen and mules for the transport."

"I shall be paid?" cried Philip in dismay.

"You will be given a receipt," said the man. "You will be paid at some future date, after the Ottoman troops have entered Sofia and Belgrade."

"Shall I get the price I ask?"

"By no means. You will get just as much as it pleases the authorities to give—and no more. But, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have been of service to his Majesty, the Sultan."

By that time, they were come to a small house, above the door of which appeared the following announcement in Turkish characters: "Commissioner for Remounts and Transport."

The two horses were handed over to an orderly, whilst Philip was conducted by the zaptieh into a kind of waiting-room. Here he was told to sit down; and after an interval of about ten minutes, he was shown into an inner room, or office, where a Turkish officer was seated at a table.

"Where do you come from?" asked the officer.

Philip replied that his home was near Angora, in Asia Minor.

"Ah," said the officer, "they breed the best horses in the world there."

At that, he filled in a printed form which lay before him on the table, signed it, and passed it across to Philip.

"Here is a receipt," said he. "You will

receive payment on presentation of this. Your horses are required by the army."

Before our horse-dealer had time to realise what had happened, he found himself in the street again. His horses had already disappeared. It occurred to him, at first, that their purchase, that very morning, in Mustafa Pasha, had been rather a waste of money; but, on second thoughts, he was able to find comfort in the reflection that, since the horses had been no more than a "blind," the government receipt would prove just as effective, and far more convenient to take about with him.

He was standing in the street, twisting the paper between his fingers, when an officer passed, so close to him as to brush his elbow. Philip looked up, and then quickly turned his face away, and hurried down the street. When he had gone about fifteen paces, he looked back, and saw that the officer was still watching him from the steps of the house.

He went on again, walking faster than ever, his heart beating wildly in excitement; for the officer, who had gone into the office of the Remount Department, was none other than Yildirim Bey; and Philip was sure that he had been recognised.

He thought it best to find his way at once to the Café of the Five Nations, in the neighbourhood of which he intended to hire a lodging. He would then have an excuse for taking the majority of his meals in the café, where he hoped eventually to come face to face with Barco.

He had some difficulty in finding the place, as the streets in the poorer part of the city were all so similar in their dirt and poverty and squalor that they were like the ramifications of a maze. Finally, with the assistance of a small boy, whom he presented with a few piastres, he succeeded in reaching his destination.

The Café of the Five Nations proved to be a ramshackle, one-storied building which lay back a little way from the street. To reach the door it was necessary to pass under a wooden archway, upon which was written in Arabic characters the announcement that all kinds of coffee could be obtained within. The house appeared deserted. The blinds were down, and the door had been left open. Evidently, the proprietor was taking his midday siesta after the custom of his country.

Philip marched boldly in, and asked in a loud voice if anyone was there. For answer came a

sort of grunt from an inner room; and presently, Haji Bagdadi himself, a fat Syrian, rolled into the room. He had all the self-assurance of a Haji, one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He had a well-fed, greasy face, sleepy eyes, and a long, oily moustache. His figure resembled a bundle of dirty clothes.

"Good day to you," said Philip. "This is the Café of the Five Nations, is it not?"

The Syrian replied that it was.

"And this is the gipsy quarter of the town?"

"This is the mahallah in which the Government compels the gipsies to live."

"I am a horse dealer from Angora," said Philip.

"I see you are," said the other. Which was reassuring.

"I arrived here this morning with two horses. The Government took them away from me, and gave me this."

He showed the proprietor the receipt. Bagdadi looked at it, and shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"What can one do?" said he. "One cannot bargain with the Government. Allah be praised! What do you want with me?"

"I cannot return immediately to Asia Minor,"

said Philip. "It will be necessary for me to stay in this city for some days, perhaps weeks. Can you tell me where I can find lodgings? Perhaps you yourself have a room?"

Bagdadi directed a fat finger at the Government receipt.

"I do not regard that as credit," said he. "You may never be paid. The ways of the Government are strange. Allah be praised!"

"I have some money," said Philip.

"Ah, indeed!" said the Syrian. "Then, I have a room which I can let you have for forty stotinki a day. But I would also require you to give me some assistance in the café. I have lost my servant this morning. He was a first class Reservist, and he has been called back to the colours of his regiment which is at Kirk Kilisse. The ways of the Government are strange."

Wholly unconscious of the fact, the fat Syrian had played into Philip's hands. Both were highly satisfied with the arrangement. Philip was to be employed in the café, to wash the cups and plates and attend the guests. Bagdadi, who was to receive forty stotinki a day, and Philip's labour for nothing, was hugely pleased with himself, as having got the best of the

bargain. The matter was settled with the usual hand-shake; and Philip paid over the money for a week's lodging, then and there.

"Do you know," said the Syrian, "I like the Kizilbashis. I would rather employ a Redhead than a Turk."

Philip replied that he was particularly fond of the Syrians, and that, with the Haji's permission, he would retire to his room in order to rest.

Though the days that followed were particularly monotonous, they were not without interest to the young Englishman, who was enabled to see something of the typical life in the poorer quarters of a Turkish town. It may be said at once, that the café was none too clean, that the air of the neighbourhood was tainted with the most unwholesome smells, and that nightly Philip rested uneasily upon his couch by reason of various species of insects which are nameless.

There was no business done until after five o'clock in the afternoon, when customers began to arrive, sometimes singly, sometimes in parties. The café remained open frequently until the small hours of the morning. There was no regular hour of closing. The Haji put out his

lights when his last guest had gone. His trade was mostly in coffee and cigarettes, and his customers usually Turks.

The saloon—as it was called—was long and narrow, with small tables and chairs arranged in lines, three chairs to a table. At one end was a bar, in front of which was an old Austrian-made piano. Since no one ever played the piano, it was presumably there as an ornament. As Bagdadi said, every café should have a piano. At the other end of the room was a platform, upon which a story-teller frequently recited long tales of the ancient valour of the Turks; and on such occasions the restaurant was crowded.

One evening, after Philip had been serving in the café for several days, and when the story-teller had reached the most dramatic point of his narrative, and an audience of about twenty-five people sat spellbound and silent in their chairs, the door was suddenly flung back upon its hinges, and there rushed into the room an old, grey-beard Turk, whose clothes were torn and dirty, and splashed with mud, as if he had been running for some distance through the mire. Moreover, great drops of perspiration were falling from his face. Around his head

was a bandage, tied hastily, and stained with blood. And upon the sleeve of his left arm was a small hole, in the centre of another blood-stain, where a bullet had drilled his arm.

One glance was enough for Philip. The old Turk was Boris Petroff, the Bulgarian spy.

TURKISH GENERAL AND STAFF (*See page 201*)

From a Photograph by Special Correspondent with the Turkish Army in Asia Minor

CHAPTER VII

A FRIEND IN NEED

Boris passed rapidly down the room, and mounting the platform, took his place by the side of the story-teller. Then, he flung forth his arms.

"Brothers," he cried, "the dogs of war are loose!"

From every quarter of the room, in a kind of murmur, arose the Arab prayer—"*In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*"

"Has war been declared against the Bulgars?" cried a man from the back of the room.

"Yes," cried the spy in a loud voice. "And the Servian, too. It is said that the Bulgars are already on the line-of-march to Mustafa Pasha."

Immediately, there was an uproar. The story-teller changed the tenor of his theme to make it suit the topic of the hour. He had been telling a tale of Saracen days, when the old conflict raged between the Crescent and the Cross. The good fight, said he, would now

continue. The time was come, once more, for the Great Ottoman Empire to put forth its strength, and make the Christians bite the dust.

His words aroused the fiery patriotism that lies dormant in the heart of every Turk. The Moslem, from China to Morocco, is a fanatic: all without the pale of Mecca are infidels and dogs.

One and all, his audience rose to their feet, and filled the air with deep, guttural shouts.

When the turmoil and excitement had subsided a little, the story-teller turned to the spy.

"Father," said he, pointing to Boris's wounds, "you have been roughly handled." He used the word "Baba," which is the term of familiar endearment by which an old man is commonly addressed in Turkey.

Boris lifted his hands, with the expressive gesture of the East. "What would you have?" he asked. "The town is full of traitors: Bulgars, Armenians, Greeks."

The Turk is not inquisitive by nature. He takes all things as a matter of course. These people, however, were wildly excited. They now divided themselves into groups, and dis-

cussed the situation with fierce enthusiasm. Not one of them doubted for a moment that Turkey would crush the Balkan League within the space of a fortnight. They had all the self-assurance of a nation whose history is the record of six centuries of conquest. There were three principles they believed in, above all things: Allah, the Prophet, and the Unconquerable Turk.

Boris, descending from the platform, passed down the centre of the room. As he brushed Philip's elbow, he whispered quickly in his ear.

"I must see you at once," said he.

Philip, without any show of haste, collected several cups, and carried these into the kitchen where he did the washing-up. There he was joined by Boris. The young Bulgarian had not yet recovered his breath. He spoke in the voice of a man who is breathless from excitement and fast running.

"My life is in danger," said he. "In the village of Musubeili, I was recognised as a spy. I had to run for my life; and it was only due to the darkness that I managed to reach the town in safety. However, they had signalled to the city guard, and I was arrested by zaptiehs as I entered the town. I managed to escape

with a couple of wounds; and for two hours, I have been hunted from pillar to post, from one end of Adrianople to the other. My pursuers may arrive here at any moment. Is there anywhere I can hide?"

Philip thought for a moment, and then remembered that, a few days before, he had found the very place for the purpose. At the back of the Café of the Five Nations was a piece of waste ground, formerly the site of several Armenian houses which had been destroyed by the great fire of 1905, and had not been rebuilt. Whilst wandering among these ruins, Philip had discovered an old dry well, the top of which was entirely hidden by shrubs.

When he told Boris of this, the Bulgarian insisted that they should go there without delay. There was, as he said repeatedly, not so much as a second to lose.

Philip went back to the café, to see if his absence had been noticed. There, he set out several clean cups, wiped the tables with a cloth, and returned in haste to Boris.

"Come!" said he. "Quick!"

Together they went out at the back of the house. The night was exceedingly dark. There were no stars in the heavens, and the moon had

not yet arisen. Philip could find his way to the well without difficulty, but they could not walk quickly, by reason of the debris that lay about—old bricks and mortar, battered cooking utensils, and even broken tables and chairs. At last, they came to the shrubs which hid the mouth of the well, and here they stopped.

"This is the place," said Philip.

Boris looked down into the well.

"Can I climb down," he asked, "or will we need a rope?"

"You can climb down without difficulty," said the other. "There are several bricks missing, and you can use the holes as the rungs of a ladder. It is quite dry at the bottom. But you will need a light."

Philip had brought with him a lantern, which he now lighted, and held over the well.

"Good!" said Boris. "But I have another favour to ask. In case I am discovered, it would not do for these to be found upon me. I must leave them in your charge."

So saying, he opened his coat, and produced the following articles in turn.

"There is my camera," said he. "I have taken several photographs of the fortifications; and these are the films. Here are my dispatches,

in this envelope. They contain valuable i
formation in regard to the defences on the south
east of the town. They are, in fact, the keys o
Adrianople. Hide them where they cannot b
found."

Philip promised to do so; and in sheer grati
tude the young Bulgarian seized his friend's
hand, and covered it with kisses. This action
may seem strange to those who live in England,
but the peoples of the East are more demonstra-
tive than the Teutonic and Celtic races, and
seldom make any attempt to disguise their
feelings.

When Boris Petroff had thanked Philip for
the seventh time, and vowed that he would
never forget his kindness and his courage, he
descended, step by step, to the bottom of the
well, whilst Philip held the lantern in order to
guide him.

Anxious that he should not be found in the
vicinity of the well, in case the zaptiehs should
arrive to arrest the Bulgarian spy, Philip
hastened to another part of the ruins, nearer to
the café. Here were three ruined walls, running
parallel to one another, formerly part of the
same house, but each now not more than four
feet high. It was along the middle one of these

that Philip passed, feeling the bricks with his hand. He had blown out the light in his lantern.

At last, he found that for which he had been searching—a loosened brick, which he had no difficulty in drawing out from the wall. Holding the brick in one hand, he struck it against the ground, and after several failures, managed to break it in half.

He then took the envelope containing the spy's dispatches, folded it up, and placed it in the hole. On top of this he put the spools of the camera films. To his dismay, he found that the camera itself was too large to go in, and he was therefore obliged to put it in his pocket. Before he replaced the smaller portion of the brick, he scratched a little cross upon the end of it with the fore-sight of his revolver, that he might be able to find the place again. Then he went on, with the intention of re-entering the café.

He was not ten paces from the door, which he had left ajar, and through which he could see the lights of the restaurant, when he was brought to an abrupt standstill by an occurrence as alarming as it was unexpected.

To a small degree, the three ruined walls

reflected the light which came from the windows and through the opened doorway of the café. Philip's attention was first attracted by the sound of someone who stumbled over the stones, and a soft oath in some strange language that he did not understand. Straining his eyes in the darkness, he was able to make out the figures of four crouching men, who were creeping along the wall, one behind the other in Indian file.

Glancing quickly at the wall on the other side, he discovered, to his consternation, six other men, moving in the same direction. To all intents and purposes, he was surrounded. He could walk back to the well, or he was free to enter the café; but there was no way of escape on either side.

He stood for a moment irresolute, endeavouring to formulate some plan of action. It was then that the door opened, and he discerned the portly figure of Bagdadi, silhouetted against the light. The Haji lifted his voice, and cried out for his servant, saying that the gentlemen in the saloon were clamouring for coffee.

Philip answered that he was coming, and took a step forward; and as he did so, a man, who had been lying flat upon the ground, jumped up

immediately before him, and made off like a cat in the darkness. For a moment, this man was immediately between Philip and the lighted doorway; and then it was that his figure seemed familiar. At the time, Philip Thornton gave the matter no more than a thought. The whole thing was so much a mystery that he could not, as it were, focus his mind upon any particular detail.

When Philip appeared by the side of the Haji, he was shaking with excitement. His heart was beating violently. In one hand he held his revolver, which he had been prepared to use at a moment's notice, the barrel of which caught the lamp-light from the café beyond. He found it hard to believe that the shadowy figures he had seen were zaptiehs, since gendarmes would scarcely have fled so precipitately at his approach.

"What's this?" cried Bagdadi, noticing Philip's state of intense excitement, and pointing to the revolver.

That was a question that was easier asked than answered.

"I don't know," said Philip, putting down the lantern on the floor. "I saw figures in the darkness. I believe the house is surrounded."

The Haji was a brave man, like the majority of his race.

"And you are afraid?" he asked with infinite scorn. "I did not know," he added, "that the Kizilbashis of Angora had the hearts of Armenians and Greeks."

"I am ready to prove to you," said Philip, "that a Kizilbashi cares as little for death as any Moslem in the world. I am ready to go back and find out who these men are; for I swear to you I saw them."

"Go back, then," said Bagdadi, with a laugh. "Turn these vermin out."

Philip had actually lighted his lantern, and had put the hammer of his revolver back to cock, when there came the sound of tempestuous hammering on the front door, on the other side of the house. Whoever it was who knocked did not trouble to wait for an answer; for, almost immediately afterwards, they heard the shuffling of many feet in the saloon. Hastening into the café, Philip and Bagdadi found the place in possession of the police.

The zaptiehs were commanded by a captain, a tall man with a grey moustache. Without any waste of time, he laid hold of the Haji by the arm.

"Are you the proprietor of this restaurant?" he demanded, in the gruff tones of one whose custom it was to do his business with dispatch.

"Yes, sir," said the Syrian. "I am."

"Well, then," said the captain, "you had best answer my question without waste of time. Did a man come here to-night who was wounded?"

"Yes."

"Was he an old man, with a grey beard?"

"Yes, sir. He was."

"Is he still here?"

The Haji looked around him, as if to ascertain whether the man who had brought the news of the outbreak of the war was still within the café. Not seeing him, he bowed his head, which, in Turkey, is the common way to signify a negative.

"I suppose," said he, "he has gone."

"*Gone!*" cried the captain, in a voice that thundered in the room. "Gone where? Come, out with the truth!"

He shook the Haji roughly—an action that the latter resented, for he scowled and folded his arms.

"Sir," said he, "I know nothing of this man. To the best of my belief, I saw him this evening

for the first time in my life. He came into my café, and told us that war had been declared. Then, I suppose he went out. I know not where he went."

The captain of zaptiehs gave the Syrian a long and searching look. Then, seeming satisfied in his own mind that Bagdadi spoke the truth, he turned quickly on his heel, and addressed the room in general.

"Did anyone see the man I have mentioned leave this room?" he demanded. "If so, by which door did he go out?"

For a moment there was silence—a silence during which Philip Thornton found it difficult to breathe. He thought of Boris, hidden at the bottom of the well, not thirty paces from the building; and he knew that his friend's life was in jeopardy. War had been declared. If caught, disguised within the outposts of the enemy, Boris would be shot as a spy. Then the story-teller, who had never moved from his place on the platform at the end of the saloon, came to the head of the steps.

"May I ask," said he, "whether this old, wounded man was an impostor?"

"Impostor!" roared the captain. "He is a Bulgar spy."

At that, a growl ran round the room. It was like the growl of savage beasts. The story-teller rose to his full height, his eyes flashing, his arms rigid at his sides.

"There is one here," he announced, in slow, deliberate tones; "there is one here who knows where the Bulgar is."

The same question came from the lips of everyone in the room, except Philip and the story-teller. The young Englishman fastened his teeth upon his lip.

"Who?" they cried. "Who knows?"

"That man there. I saw them speak together in whispers."

His right arm shot up, and his long finger was directed at Philip, who felt as if the blood within his veins was frozen. Before he had time to realise what had happened, his arms had been seized by two zaptiehs, and he was held as in a vice.

"Ah," said the captain. "For the time being we must suppose that you are an agent of the man we want. Come, speak the truth, and have done with it. Which way did he go?"

Never for a moment was Philip Thornton in the slightest doubt. He had rather suffer death a thousand times than betray his friend. He

pressed his lips together tightly, and closed his eyes, showing the captain as plainly as words could tell that nothing could drag his secret from him.

It was the story-teller, still upon the platform, who spoke again, like some relentless oracle.

"They went through the kitchen," he declared, "one following the other. The spy made his escape from the back of the house."

At that, the captain, ordering his zaptiehs to follow him, and to bring Philip with them and as many lamps as they could find, left the room in the greatest haste.

It was during the next few minutes that Philip suffered the greatest suspense he ever endured in his life. With his hands bound behind his back, and two armed men on either side of him, he witnessed a well-ordered and systematic search for traces of the Bulgarian spy.

In such a situation, seconds pass like minutes, and minutes seem drawn out to hours. Sometimes a zaptieh, lantern in hand, passed so close to the place where he had hidden the spy's dispatches that he could actually see the little cross he had made upon the brick. Whenever any one of them went near to the shrubs that hid

the mouth of the well, the young Englishman went hot and cold by turns. It was the captain himself who was the first to find a clue.

"Here!" he cried. "Come here!"

The gendarmes rushed to their captain's side, dragging Philip with them; so that, at last, the whole party, including the Turks who had been present in the café and Haji Bagdadi himself, was gathered around the well.

"These bushes," said the captain, "have been trampled down within the last few minutes. See here," he cried, thrusting a piece of broken wood into the light of a lantern. "This has only just been broken. It is wet with sap. Come, lend a lantern."

He took a lantern from one of his men, and held it before him. Then, for the first time, he saw the well, and let out a shout of triumph.

"He is in there!" he cried. "Stand by; and be ready to fire. These Bulgars do not die without a fight."

The captain went to the edge of the well, and looked over. Philip's heart was in his mouth, as he waited for the shot that was to lay Boris Petroff low. For some reason, he then thought of Alma.

Time hung heavily. Since nothing happened,

it seemed an eternity of waiting; and by degrees the circle drew nearer and nearer to the mouth of the well, until, at last, Philip himself was standing on the brink.

A lantern was lowered on a string, so that the well was illumined. When Philip looked down, he could not at first believe the evidence of his eyes—for the spy was no longer there.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COURT-MARTIAL

THE zaptiehs moved away from the well in none of the best of tempers. Assuredly, it would have gone ill with Boris had he been discovered then. The captain, who tugged fiercely at the ends of his moustache, gave orders that Philip was to be conducted back to the café, where he was to be detained, whilst the search continued.

In the saloon, Philip found himself an object of much interest to the customers from whom he had been in the habit of receiving orders. Bagdadi himself was still under the impression that the zaptiehs had been deceived. He was perfectly sure in his mind that Philip was a Kizilbashi, a loyal subject of the Sultan, and no more a Bulgarian spy than himself. However, unfortunately for Philip, the matter was not in the Haji's hands. There was small reason to believe that the captain would prove so utterly void of suspicion.

The zaptiehs took every precaution that their prisoner should not escape. Though Philip's

hands were bound behind his back, they tied him fast to one of the posts that supported the roof. And when they had done that, they seated themselves at a table, with their loaded rifles in their hands, and after the manner of soldiers when martial law is proclaimed, ordered the Haji to bring them coffee, and to look sharp about it.

For nearly four hours, Philip Thornton was left to his thoughts, and these were by no means pleasant. During that eventful evening—the evening of the seventeenth of October—so many startling events had happened in such rapid succession that it was impossible to say which of these was disconnected and independent, or whether they were all as so many links in the same long chain of incident.

In the first place, who were the men who, before the arrival of the zaptiehs, had approached the house by way of the ruins at the back; and why was it that the figure of one of these, as seen before the light in the open doorway, had seemed familiar? Above all, how was it that Boris had succeeded in making his escape? The whole thing had been managed without a sound. There had been no shot; there had been no cry for help. From this it appeared likely that the

men who had been seen creeping stealthily among the ruins were the friends of the young Bulgarian spy.

The clock in the saloon had struck the hour of two before the captain and his zaptiehs returned. They had carried their search into the remoter parts of the city; but neither trace nor news of the Bulgar had been found.

The captain was furious. His eyes were bloodshot. His moustache positively bristled like the whiskers of a cat.

"The fox has escaped," cried he to Philip, striding down the room with his drawn sword in his hand. "I advise you to tell us what you know."

"Sir," said Philip, "I will speak the truth."

"Good!" said the captain, seating himself in a chair and thrusting both legs forward.

Philip looked the captain straight in the eyes, and spoke as man to man.

"I swear to you," said he, "that I am no Bulgarian spy. I own, however, that I am the friend of the man you mention. As to where he has gone, or where he is now hiding, I am quite unable to tell you. That is all I have to say."

"And that is less than I believe," said the

captain, bringing down his fist upon the table. "A Bulgar spy you are, for you were seen to show the man a way of escape. A Kizilbashi, are you?" he cried, rising quickly to his feet. "A Redhead? What is this?"

As he uttered these last words, he seized the false moustache which, following the instructions of Velian, the Greek, Philip had glued to his upper lip, and with a wrench he pulled it away. Philip was unable to offer the slightest resistance. He could only stand still and allow his identity to be exposed. When Bagdadi, the fat Syrian proprietor of the café, saw what had happened, he staggered backward as though he had been struck.

The captain, bursting into a loud laugh, turned to his men.

"Search him," said he. "Turn out the rascal's pockets."

The order was instantly obeyed. First, the revolver was produced.

"That's a good weapon," said the captain, in the critical tone of an expert. "English-made. I would like to know how such a revolver as this came into the hands of a Kizilbashi from Angora?"

One of the zaptiehs then discovered Philip's

money-belt; and this was handed over to the captain.

"This is wealth, indeed," said the officer, lifting his eyebrows high. "I should think there are very few horse dealers in Anatolia as wealthy as this. Once again, these are English—English sovereigns—negotiable coins from one end of the world to the other."

"I am an Englishman," said Philip simply.

"First, you are a Kizilbashi," said the captain; "then, you are an Englishman; next, I suppose, you will be a Chinese, or a Dervish. For myself, I prefer to look upon you as a Bulgar spy. What's this?" said he, as Philip's pocket-book was given into his hands.

Philip now blushed scarlet.

"I must tell you, sir," said he, "there is a letter there which is purely private in nature."

"Private!" cried the captain. "Pooh, there is no such thing in war! Let us see what this pocket-book contains."

He first produced the receipt, signed by the officer of the Remount Department, for the two horses which Philip had disposed of a few days before.

"You do things thoroughly," said the captain, with a grunt. He then produced a letter in a

feminine hand-writing, with a Bulgarian stamp on it and the post-mark of Sofia.

This letter was one of the links in the unfortunate chain of circumstantial evidence which Philip realised was being forged by Fate, to hurl him into the fulsome depths of some Turkish dungeon. During the young Englishman's stay in Sofia, Alma Petroff had devoted some of the little time she had to spare to teaching him Bulgarian. Whilst Philip was in Adrianople, several letters had passed between them; and this, which had been received the day before he left Adrianople for Mustafa Pasha, was written in Cyrillian characters. The captain of zaptiehs, who understood Bulgarian, read the letter through, from start to end.

"I think, we have sufficient evidence already," said he, "to settle your account. You were seen to aid a Bulgarian to escape. You are both disguised and armed, and have been carrying upon your person a considerable sum of money. Also, it appears, you have a sweetheart in Sofia. And as for this," he cried in a loud voice, his eyes opening wide as he beheld the camera; "as for this, it puts the question beyond all doubt. In a few hours, my friend, you will be shot."

He handled the camera almost tenderly; and by the way in which he opened and closed it, unscrewed the lense, and rolled up the spool, it was evident he had some knowledge of photography.

"An excellent machine," said he. "Purchased in Sofia. A spool of twelve films, six of which have been exposed. What have we here?" He drew out from the platform of the camera a small writing tablet, on which certain notes had been made in pencil. "Obviously," said he, "this is a record of the exposed films. The writing is Bulgarian."

He then read aloud as follows:

"1. *The approach to Yildiz Fort, southern face.*
2. *Wire entanglement, ditto.*
3. *Forty-ton gun, Kavkas Fort.*
4. *Outer defences, ditto.*
5. *Landmark to guide line-of-attack on Top Yolu.*
6. *Glacis, outer ditch and parapet: Top Yolu.*"

The captain rose to his feet.

"That evidence," said he, "would hang the Caliph."

There was some delay before the police left the café, whilst the room in which Philip had slept during the last few days was searched. Then, since no further evidence was forthcoming, and the captain was anxious to be gone, the zaptiehs left in a body, taking with them Philip Thornton a prisoner, his hands bound behind his back.

They had not gone ten yards before one and all—the captain, his men and even the prisoner himself—came, on a sudden, to a standstill. They stood rigid and attentive, straining their ears, with their faces turned to the north-west.

Far away, in the direction of Mustafa Pasha, guns were growling in the night. The Bulgars were streaming through the mountain passes, upon the rich fields of Thrace.

"Forward!" cried the captain of the zaptiehs. Like an old war horse, he scented blood, and his voice was clearer than before.

As they passed through the narrow streets, the supposed Bulgarian spy was subjected to the most violent insults from the mob. Though it was now three o'clock in the morning, many people were abroad. The city was in an uproar. The excitement was intense. The night echoed with the throbbing of drums, and strains of

martial music filled the air, as regiment after regiment marched out from barracks to the outpost line on the northern side of the town.

The morning was bitterly cold and dark. Not a star was visible in the sky. A wind was blowing from the north-east that felt like rain. Philip had a recollection of passing a guard-house, where a brief conversation took place between the captain of police and the non-commissioned officer in charge of the guard, at the end of which the prisoner was cast neck and crop into a small cell, not more than three yards across.

Here, Philip remained for nearly three days, during which period food of the most coarse description and water were brought to him at intervals. There was no possible means of escape. His bed was nothing but a bare plank, raised about two feet above the level of the floor, upon which was, at least, an inch of water. There was no air in the place, save that which found ingress through the cracks in the heavy door. The cell was at once cold and stuffy.

At last, the door was opened, and a sergeant, who was followed by six Turkish soldiers, made his appearance.

"Follow me," said he; and before Philip had time to obey, he was seized by the scruff of the neck, and bundled out of the room.

The prisoner was conducted between fixed bayonets across a barrack square, where there was no one but a solitary sentry, leaning upon his rifle in front of a dilapidated sentry-box. It was again night, and though there was no moon, it seemed quite light to Philip, whose eyes had grown accustomed to the impenetrable blackness of his prison. On the other side of the square was a long, one-storied building, several windows of which were illumined. At the door stood an orderly, who laughed as the prisoner passed.

A moment later, Philip found himself in a long, narrow room, at the further end of which there was a table, covered with books, papers, and writing materials. At the table sat three Turkish officers—the middle one an elderly man with grey hair and a grey beard and moustache. On a small table, by the side of the larger one, were Alma Petroff's letter, Philip's revolver, the receipt for the two horses, and the camera and films.

It is unnecessary to enter at length into the details of the court-martial that followed. In

time of war, in all civilised countries, a court-martial can be convened with special powers to deal summarily with prisoners. When the invading armies are thundering at the city gates, it is no time for niceties and the little exactitudes of law.

To the charge of being a Bulgarian spy Philip pleaded "Not Guilty." He protested that he was an Englishman, and had the right to appeal to his consul. At that he was asked why he had disguised himself as a Kizilbashi. Also, why had he rendered assistance to one of the enemy? The president of the court said that the maximum penalty, both for espionage and for rendering aid to the enemy, was death. But, if the prisoner was not a spy himself, how did he account for the fact that photographs of Adrianople had been found upon his person? If he was not a spy, why had he been at pains to select a suitable line of attack upon the eastern sector of forts?

To these questions, Philip could only answer the truth, and there are times when the bald truth seems pitifully weak. The statement he made in his own defence was not believed. The court would listen to no tales of gipsy murderers of English travellers. The president ordered

the escort to march out the prisoner, whilst the sentence was considered.

Philip was not absent from the room for longer than five minutes. When the prisoner and escort were again drawn up before the table, the grey-headed president rose slowly to his feet.

"The court finds the prisoner guilty," said he, in measured tones. "He is sentenced to be shot."

A thousand thoughts flew like rockets through Philip Thornton's brain. He remembered his uncle; he thought of Alma Petroff, of Boris, and even of Haji Bagdadi. Also, he remembered Barco, and his old school; and in some strange way these two seemed linked together. Barco! The man who had jumped up at his feet, whose figure he had seen in front of the light of the opened doorway of the café, was Barco, the gipsy, who had killed his uncle! He was so sure of it that he was amazed at his own stupidity that he had not thought of it before. Still, it was strange that he should have remembered at a time when his brain seemed numbed by the truth that had been hurled upon him like a thunderbolt—that he was to be shot as a Bulgar spy.

The president, leaning across the table, struck

a match, and calmly lighted a cigarette. Then he gave orders to the commander of the escort that the sentence was to be carried out at daybreak that very day, as soon as the proceedings had been signed by the Governor.

As Philip crossed the barrack square once more, between the bayonets of the soldiers, he heard a clock in the neighbourhood strike ten. He was to be shot at daybreak. Daybreak, he supposed, was at six o'clock. He had therefore only eight hours in which to live.

Such a thought is not enlivening. However, as often as not, the face of death appears more grim and terrible from a distance than when viewed from near at hand. Philip was able to find satisfaction in the thought that, at least, he had been loyal to his friend. He had done what he could to save Boris, and he had succeeded. It was he himself who was lost.

How time passed in his cell, he never knew. For some minutes he prayed, kneeling in the wet. Then he asked the sergeant of the guard for permission to write a letter to his friends in England, and his request was promptly refused. He had neither mother nor father, but he had been brought up by an aunt, who was very

dear to him; and he would have liked to have let her know of the fate that was his.

After a time, he found it impossible to sit still. He got to his feet, and paced the cell for—what seemed to him—eternity. He was convinced that it was daylight.

He listened at the door, and could hear nothing. By now the silence and the darkness were almost unbearable. He even longed for the soldiers to come and take him away to die.

At last, there came the sound of footsteps in the passage without. A narrow shaft of light from a lantern crept slowly under the door. He heard voices; and then a key was thrust into the lock, and the door was thrown back.

Philip was at first blinded by the light. He could see nothing but the tall figure of a man who was wrapped about in a cloak. Gradually, in a kind of haze, he made out, feature by feature, the stern face of Yildirim Bey.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOGS OF WAR

YILDIRIM BEY drew close to Philip, and looked him steadfastly in the face.

"Be so good as to follow me," said he, turning sharply on his heel.

Philip Thornton obeyed, not yet able to realise the full significance of what had happened. His fortunes, it seemed, changed so rapidly, events befell in such startling and bewildering succession, that it was difficult indeed to keep abreast of Fate.

The guards made way for him, as he followed Yildirim along the passage, up a short and narrow flight of steps, and across the barrack square. It was dawn—a cold, cloudy sunrise, black overhead, with a great arc of silver-grey above the eastern sky-line. The muffled sentry at the main gate presented arms as the Bey passed, and soon after, Philip found himself in one of the principal streets.

Presently, they came to Yildirim's house, which Philip recognised at once. The Bey

took a key from his pocket, opened the door, and led the way into the room where he had interviewed Philip soon after his return to Adrianople.

"Pray be seated," said he. He then ordered an attendant, who made his appearance at that moment, to bring coffee and cigarettes. During the interval that elapsed before the man returned, Yildirim sat in silence, drumming with his fingers on the table.

"There are many things about this business," said he, when at last they were alone; "there are many things which I am wholly unable to understand. Why should you—an Englishman—go to the trouble of disguising yourself as a Kizilbash horse-dealer? Why should you serve as a menial attendant in a third-class café in the poorer part of the town?"

"Before I answer that," said Philip, "it would be some relief to me to know whether or not I am to die."

"You were sentenced to be shot this morning. Late last night, the proceedings of the court-martial came to Shukri Pasha to be signed and confirmed. The 'exhibits,' produced in evidence against you were also forwarded for the Governor to inspect at leisure. Fortunately

for you, I happen to be a member of the General Staff. I took the liberty of reading a letter addressed to you by a certain Bulgarian lady. From that letter, I had no doubt that the prisoner was yourself. If you remember rightly, I passed you in the streets a few weeks ago. I recognised you at once. I was convinced you were innocent of the charge.

"I explained matters to the Pasha. I said that you were the nephew of Sir Charles Thornton, the scientist, that you were an Englishman with influential friends in London, and that, if you were put to death, questions might be asked You must understand that this would not have saved you. The evidence against you was too strong. I was obliged to use all my influence with the Governor to allow me to see you in prison. The moment I set eyes upon you, I recognised you; and if you can give me a satisfactory explanation for your conduct, I am empowered to set you free."

Philip drained his cup of coffee. He felt faint and tired, and the coffee seemed to revive his strength. After prison fare, he thought it the greatest luxury he had ever tasted.

"It is a long story," said he. "I propose to tell you the truth."

He then related the whole narrative of his adventures, from the time he arrived in Bulgaria. He described the murder of his uncle and the scene in the forest on that fateful night; he laid stress upon his friendship with Boris, and even mentioned the affection he had for Alma. He said that it was solely with the idea of coming face to face with Barco, and avenging his uncle's death, that he had disguised himself and taken service under Haji Bagdadi in the Café of the Five Nations. Thither Boris Petroff had come to him, wounded, hard pressed by zaptiehs, in the hour of need. The ties of friendship were strong; and Philip confessed that he had helped the spy to escape. He had hidden him in a place of safety, whence he had most miraculously disappeared. Where the Bulgarian had gone, what had become of him, Philip was unable to say; though he was inclined to think that he had fallen into the hands of the gipsies.

"That is to say," said Yildirim, sending a puff of smoke into the air, "that he is dead. The gipsies have cut his throat; which is the same thing, as far as Turkey is concerned, as being shot as a spy. You may take it from me, your friend, who is a bitter enemy to Turkey,

is no longer in the land of the living. On personal grounds, I condole with you. As a Turk, I am delighted at the information."

"And my fate?" asked Philip. "What is that to be?"

Yildirim made rings of tobacco smoke in the air.

"I will let you go," he answered, "provided you leave the city within two hours. If you return, you do so at your own risk. I refuse to protect you any longer. You cannot blame me for that," he added, with a smile that was altogether charming.

"I feel nothing but gratitude," said Philip.

"Your uncle," said Yildirim, "was a man that I esteemed."

He went to a cupboard, opened it, and threw Philip's belt upon the table.

"There," said he, "and when you get back to England, I should not like you to say that the Turks robbed you. And here is a letter you may have a wish to keep. You must forgive me for reading its contents. I was in duty bound to do so." So saying, he handed Philip the letter he had received from Alma.

"Where am I to go?" asked Philip.

Yildirim shrugged his shoulders.

"If you tried to get to Constantinople by train," he answered, "you would probably not succeed. Very serious fighting is taking place in the neighbourhood of Kirk Kilisse. From intelligence just received, it appears our troops have failed to arrest the Bulgarian advance, and are falling back upon Baba Eski and Lule Burgas. This city may be cut off at any moment. For myself, I would like you to get out of Turkey as quickly as possible. Adrianople is not far from the Bulgarian frontier. You will find it a saving of time to walk. Indeed, it will be useless for you to endeavour to procure means of transport. Horses are valuable in time of war. Though I had the greatest respect for your uncle, I desire nothing better than to see your back. You must pardon me for my rudeness."

A few minutes later, Philip wished good-bye to this courteous and gallant soldier, who had been instrumental in saving his life. He left the town by the road which runs parallel to the Maritza, and which goes to Mustafa Pasha.

At that early hour, few people were abroad, though even then several families were coming into the city in bullock-carts loaded with their

belongings. Evidently, during the days he had spent in prison, it had been raining hard, for the main roads were ankle-deep in mud, and the by-ways quagmires.

When the sun came out and flooded the valley with its light, a thick mist arose upon the slopes of the hills and made it impossible to see for any distance. It was then that Philip was overcome by a feeling of faintness, due, no doubt, to the hardships he had suffered. For some minutes he was obliged to sit down by the side of the road; and while he was there, he witnessed some strange examples of the panic which even now was spreading like wild-fire over Macedonia and Thrace.

Fugitives — for the most part Bulgarians, Armenians, and Greeks—were leaving Adrianople from the north: whereas others—Turkish families fleeing from the Bulgars—were seeking safety in the great fortress, on the eve of a famous siege.

One and all, these people looked like hunted beasts. The men cracked their whips above the toiling oxen; women, pale and frightened, waded knee-deep in the mire; whilst little children, seated in the carts upon piles of baggage, cried continually for food. This was

the first time that Philip set eyes upon the desolation and confusion which are the inevitable consequences of war. It did not require the experience of an old campaigner to know that the dogs of war were loose.

A regiment of redifs passed him on the road, moving to the north. They were singing as they marched. Even then, they seemed confident of victory. And hardly had the sound of their singing died away in the distance, and the strains of their music and the beating of the drums, than another regiment came south, which was a regiment only in name.

The ranks were broken. The men, mud-stained and weary, looked half-starved, and dragged themselves forward with difficulty and pain. Many were wounded, and blood-stained bandages were bound about their limbs. In their wake came bullock-carts, loaded with wounded, and as these went by, Philip saw faces that he will never forget—faces hideously contorted in agony, or shattered and disfigured by wounds. The groans of these men were heart-breaking, as the wagons jolted on the road.

Philip got to his feet and walked on. He continued on his way until the afternoon was

far advanced. By then, the houses by the roadside were all deserted.

At last, he felt that he could go no farther without food. Cost what it might, he would obtain something to eat. He left the road, and climbed to the top of a high hill to the east, whence he was able to obtain an extensive view of the country—for, by now, the mist had lifted.

All about him were vast, rolling downs. The wind was from the east, and there came to his ears, like the sound of far-distant thunder, the booming of heavy guns. It seemed strange to him, as he listened, that over yonder, in the direction of Kirk Kilisse, brave men were being killed like sheep, because the Sublime Porte did not understand the art of government, and "Macedonia" must be avenged.

The firing grew heavier and heavier, until, at last, it was like one long, continuous peal of thunder. There was nothing to be seen above the bleak and lonely uplands to the east but a bank of clouds, menacingly black.

It is strange that a man can think of his own small comforts when such prodigious happenings are in progress. The fact that hundreds were giving up their lives in the trenches at Kirk

Kilisse did not make Philip Thornton less hungry. He scanned the country on every side, and at last discerned a small house, far in the distance, from which a column of smoke was issuing.

Setting out in this direction, weak and faint, hardly able to walk, in course of time he arrived at the house. It was inhabited by a Greek, from whom he purchased a jug of goat's milk and some rye bread. To his surprise, he now felt disinclined to eat, though he was possessed by a raging thirst. The Greek, seeing that his guest was seriously ill, made Philip lie down upon a bed, where the young Englishman immediately fell fast asleep.

For ten hours Philip lay in a burning fever. During that time the Greek showed him every kindness. It was not until the morning of the twenty-second that he felt able to continue on his way. He had no precise idea as to whither he was going, except that he was obeying Yildirim's orders—to reach the Bulgarian frontier.

Soon after midday, he was following a narrow lane some distance from, and running parallel to, the main road that runs from Adrianople to Mustafa Pasha, and had reached an eminence upon which was a large, cup-shaped windmill,

where the road turned sharply to the west, when he beheld, from end to end of the wide valley at his feet, a sight that brought him to a standstill.

The whole Turkish army, which had lately held the frontier fortress of Mustafa Pasha, was in full retreat. To the south, the valley was dotted with small figures, crawling like ants upon the plain. They were in no sort of military formation. Each man seemed possessed of but one idea: to fly where there was safety and food. These men were evidently reservists, the ill-trained, ill-disciplined troops of whom Yildirim had spoken. To the north, the army retired in good order. The road was thronged with long, snake-like columns, followed by their baggage trains and transport. The Turks fell back in column of route, their bayonets glistening, their rear protected, still confident of ultimate success. It was a retiring, but not a defeated force. There, in the valley, was still the Unconquerable Turk.

Philip was too amazed at what he saw to continue on his way. Seating himself upon the ground he witnessed this colossal, moving spectacle, and saw the drama played out to its end.

Presently, the thunder of guns burst upon the hills a few miles to the north. As time went on, the firing grew louder and louder; until, at length, before the rear of the retiring army was two miles down the valley, he was able to see flashes of fire, and to hear the sharp rattle of musketry, as the Bulgarian advanced guard pressed upon the retreat.

Then were seen large bodies of Turkish cavalry, galloping in haste from hill to hill. Batteries of artillery came southward at the trot, unlimbered, and hurled their shell to the north. By then the action extended for many miles, both to the east and to the west. Assuredly, Philip himself would be enveloped by the attack.

Thinking it advisable not to occupy so prominent a position, he ran down the hill, and took refuge in a clump of trees upon the banks of a narrow stream. Here his view of the operations was more limited, but the noise was deafening in his ears. He was evidently between the firing lines of the opposing forces. Shells shrieked and hooted overhead, and burst in clouds of smoke and dust; bullets whistled through the air, and cut twigs from the branches of the trees that came fluttering to the ground.

Then, he saw to the west a long line of cavalrymen, widely extended, moving forward at the gallop. One of these passed quite close to him, and he saw that the rider was a Bulgarian. Then, batteries passed, so near to him that he could hear the jingle of chains, the loud shouts of the drivers and the cracking of their whips. One battery came into action by the windmill on the crest of the hill he had left. And then, the fight rolled southward like a wave.

The descent of the Bulgarian army upon the rich fields of Thrace was like a thunderbolt. King Ferdinand's men came through the mountain passes in three columns, and hurled their weight upon the northern fortresses of Kirk Kilisse and Mustafa Pasha, with a fury that was irresistible.

The Turks were overcome by the suddenness, as much as by the force, of these colossal blows. Moreover, they had made the fatal mistake of transporting the bulk of their supplies to Kirk Kilisse, before the Army Corps were mobilised and ready to take the field. On both these occasions, and in the larger engagements that followed, they fought with the heroism that has distinguished their nation in the past. At first, they were defeated by superior numbers. Later,

they were defeated by their own commissariat arrangements which were inadequate and inefficient, as Yildirim had foretold. Once they had fallen back from their advanced positions, they were practically never allowed a halt, or a day's rest, until the Bulgarian guns could be heard from the walls of Constantinople. Never in the history of the world has a retreat been followed up in so swift and masterly a manner.

Nightfall found Philip still upon the road. The Ottoman rear-guard was being pursued by the Bulgarian cavalry to the very gates of Adrianople. Even after dark the sound of the guns could still be heard, driving the Turks back upon the fortress.

At about ten o'clock at night, Philip came upon a great bivouac, where an army was encamped. He was still in the valley of the Maritza. It was as if he had come to a place where a city was all life and animation. A thousand lights were burning in the night; and he could see figures moving to and fro, between the fires.

He went forward in haste, stumbling through the mud, and before long he was challenged by a sentry. He answered in such Bulgarian as he knew; but, since he was unable to give the

countersign, and was still wearing his Turkish fez, he was handed over to a guard, who had orders to conduct him to the colonel of the regiment which had furnished that section of the piquet line. Philip's relief may be imagined when he recognised in this colonel one of Boris Petroff's friends, whom he had frequently met in the officers' club in Sofia.

CHAPTER X

A NIGHT ATTACK

No sooner had Philip made known his identity, than the colonel grasped him by the hand.

"And what of Petroff?" he cried. "We have no news of him. We fear that he is dead."

Philip answered that he knew nothing definite; and it was then that the colonel noticed how fatigued he was.

"You want food," said he. "You look frozen. We are on half rations ourselves; but you are welcome to whatever we can find."

So saying, he led the way to a place where a group of officers was seated around a camp-fire, which burned under a tarpaulin spread over two transport wagons. Philip was introduced into this circle, where he found one or two old friends. The night was piercingly cold; a strong wind was blowing across the tableland of Thrace. He was too glad of the warmth of the fire to care much for the smoke which hung beneath the tarpaulin like a cloud.

They gave him a full meal of ration biscuits, tea, and tinned meat, and offered to provide him with blankets, horse-rugs, and a waterproof sheet. But, before he could think of going to sleep, they had news for him. First, however, he had to relate his own adventures.

Philip told the Bulgarians much the same story he had told Yildirim Bey. They listened in silence, in wrapt attention. When the story was ended, they had no comments to make, though it was plain by their demeanour that they appreciated Philip's gallantry in having saved young Petroff's life.

"To tell the truth," said the colonel, "you were the last man we expected to see. No doubt, you will be surprised to hear there is a ransom on your life."

"A ransom!" cried Philip.

"Yes. We understood that you had fallen into the hands of bandits. We do not know the full details of the matter, as we only heard by chance from an orderly who came to-day from Kirk Kilisse. It appears an urgent cablegram has been received from England, addressed to Petroff at his lodgings in Sofia. This cablegram was opened by Petroff's sister who, seeing that it contained a matter of grave importance,

somehow managed to forward it to the headquarters of his regiment, which is taking part in the fighting at Kirk Kilisse. The message is concerned with you."

Philip, amazed, said that he could not think what the cablegram contained.

"Of that," said the colonel, "I can give you no more than an idea. From what the orderly told us, we gathered that you had fallen into the hands of a party of gipsies, or bandits, who somehow had obtained the address of some of your friends in England. Apparently, they have written to these friends and demanded five hundred pounds as ransom, saying that, if the money is not forthcoming by a certain date, they will not hesitate to put you to death."

For a moment, Philip was totally unable to find any explanation for this unexpected development in his affairs. Then, on a sudden, he saw the truth, as one solves a picture puzzle. The whole thing was plain: *Boris had been mistaken for himself.*

He put the facts of the case together. In explaining the matter to the Bulgarian officers, he was obliged to leave much to conjecture, or guesswork; but, in the light of future events, his conjectures proved correct.

He had gone disguised to the Café of the Five Nations with the object of coming face to face with Barco. He had been told by the man he had bribed that Barco was in the habit of frequenting the house of Haji Bagdadi. The scoundrel had evidently broken faith with him, for Barco, to Philip's knowledge, had never been near the café, and there was every reason to believe that the hammal had been warned of his danger. Shortly before the arrival of the zaptiehs, on the fatal night when Philip was arrested, Barco, and others of the gipsy gang, had been seen hovering like jackals in the vicinity of the café. Beyond doubt it was they who had discovered Boris in the well. Now, the tall, lean man, who had taken Philip's bribe, never saw the young Englishman after he disguised himself. Boris was also disguised. The mistake was therefore natural enough.

Had the situation been less serious, Philip would have felt inclined to laugh. The element of humour was not absent. He had been mistaken for Petroff, and arrested as a Bulgarian spy, and Boris had been seized by the gipsies under the impression that he was the Englishman. It was, in fact, another Comedy of Errors.

Barco was a rare and unmitigated scoundrel—a gipsy who could speak English and who could both read and write in Arabic. Philip had seen the man appropriate certain of Sir Charles Thornton's papers on the night of the murder. Amongst these were letters, giving the address of relatives in England. To these relatives a letter had been written—probably by a professional letter-writer, paid by Barco—demanding five hundred pounds as the price of Philip's life.

It is the custom of bandits to appoint a rendezvous, where the agent of the prisoner's friends shall pay over the ransom. Philip could formulate no plan to rescue the young Bulgarian, until he was in possession of the full facts of the case. In order to see the cablegram itself, he would have to go to Kirk Kilisse, where Petroff's battalion was taking part in the advance.

That night, the Bulgarian colonel had a long interview with the general in command of the column. It had been strictly forbidden for any European to remain at the front with the Bulgarian forces. Orders had been issued to arrest all strangers and war correspondents, and transport them over the frontier. This, however, according to the general, was a very exceptional

case. Boris Petroff was a spy who, from Philip's narrative, appeared already to have gained valuable information concerning the enemy's dispositions and defences. It was therefore necessary to rescue Boris at every cost. It would be worth the while of the Bulgarian Government to pay the ransom. Five hundred pounds is a trifle in time of war; and a commander-in-chief will often willingly pay thousands to obtain reliable information in regard to the enemy's movements.

Late that night, Philip was sent for by the general, who handed him a letter which he was to carry to General Savoff, the Bulgarian Chief of the Staff, who was then at Kirk Kilisse.

"I will be quite frank with you," said the general. "It is of the utmost importance to the Bulgarian army to gain possession of young Petroff's dispatches. From what I have heard of your story, it appears that no one knows where these dispatches are but you yourself, who hid them. Therefore you must go at once to General Savoff. I propose to send with you two orderlies who will have instructions not to let you out of their sight."

Philip appeared to have no choice in the matter. He had told his story. He had made

it quite clear that he was in a position to render material service to the Bulgarian head-quarters. The general meant to make the best use of him; and the two men who were to accompany him, under the plea of showing him the way, were in reality his guards.

Though Philip had not been two hours with the Bulgarian army, he was conscious that the Bulgarian idea of discipline and duty was very different from that prevailing in Turkey. Remonstrances would be useless. It would be quite futile to point out that he was disinclined to take an active part in the war. Neither did he desire to say anything of the sort, when his friend's life was in danger, and it behoved him to do what he could to save the life of the spy. From this moment, and during the eventful days that followed, he—a disinterested spectator—was caught, as it were, in the vortex of battle and borne forward upon the current of a great campaign. He was no more than a straw on the waves, buffeted and hurled in all directions.

That night he made the best of matters, and slept as only those can sleep who are thoroughly exhausted. When, at six o'clock in the morning, he was shaken, and told he must get up, he

looked back with regret upon the lazy hours of late mornings and afternoon siestas when he served in Bagdadi's café. Then he remembered Boris, and recognised that he must be up and doing, if the young Bulgarian was to be rescued. Seated cross-legged on the ground, he snatched a hasty breakfast, and then swung into the saddle between two cavalrymen, with faces at once expressionless and fierce, the spoon-like blades of whose lances glittered in the light of dawn.

They set off together across country at a trot, moving due eastward, across a practically treeless country of vast, rolling downs. They had not been an hour upon the line-of-march, when the sound of firing came to their ears from the south. Soon after, they heard heavier firing farther away to the north-east. Apparently the Bulgarians were driving south on two objectives: first, the fortress of Adrianople; and secondly, the important railway junction of Baba Eski. If they could succeed in capturing this latter place, Adrianople would be cut off both from the capital and the head-quarters of the Grand Army of Thrace, which were at Lule Burgas. In Turkey there are few roads suitable for wheeled transport. An army in the field

must have food and ammunition, and the Turkish troops, concentrated around Chorlu and Kirk Kilisse, could only obtain their supplies by way of the railway line.

During his stay in Adrianople, Philip had learnt, from the conversations that took place nightly in Haji Bagdadi's café, something of the dispositions of the main Turkish army. He knew that the First Army Corps, under Yavir Pasha, was in position towards Kirk Kilisse. The First Turkish Army Corps—comprising the first, second, and third divisions—was composed of the picked troops of the Ottoman Empire, the permanent garrison of Constantinople. Upon this corps depended the future of Thrace; for Kirk Kilisse, at the extremity of the road south to Baba Eski, was the key to the situation. If the Bulgarians reached the railway line from this direction, the Grand Army of Thrace would be cut in half: one half isolated in Adrianople; the other massed between Lule Burgas and Chorlu, under the command of Abdulla Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief.

In time of war, the sound of guns in the distance is very wonderful and moving. The thunder of cannon tells of the magnificent barbarity of war. But these cannon-shots have

another and more practical meaning. They explain strategic movements. The experienced ear can detect an advance or a retreat, as the firing grows louder or less distinct.

Philip Thornton had no experience as a soldier; for all that, he had a soldier's instinct. He had delighted in tales of war. As a schoolboy, he had followed the course of great campaigns, and had seen and understood something of how armies are moved upon the field. Upon this raw, sunless morning, the firing in the direction of Kirk Kilisse was heavier than when he had heard it before. It was evident that, in that direction, the Bulgarians were pressing home their attack, whereas the Turks were standing heroically at bay. On the other hand, the firing around Adrianople seemed to have closed in upon the city. Indeed, it was whilst Philip lay sick in the house of the Greek on the Mustafa Pasha road, that the rear-guard of the Turkish army was driven beyond the defences, and the siege of Adrianople began.

To reach the head-quarters, they had to cover a distance of over sixty miles. This is measured as the crow flies; but, they could not, in fact, take so short a route. In this part of Turkey, the valleys run north and south, since the rivers

flow from the Balkans to the Sea of Marmora. In consequence, every few miles they were obliged to make a wide detour to find a ford or bridge by which some river could be crossed. A great deal of rain had fallen during the past fortnight, and not only were the tributaries of the Maritza swollen high, but the ground—consisting of a black, glutinous clay—was so sodden and heavy that it was impossible to gallop for any distance.

They were not fifteen miles upon their journey when they realised that it was absolutely impossible to reach Kirk Kilisse before nightfall. The soldiers therefore decided to bivouac, and selected a suitable camping-ground, a deserted farm-house where there were stabling and forage for their horses. That night they dined off a fat goose, which one of the soldiers killed with his lance and cooked upon the spot.

The troopers arranged for one to relieve the other as sentry at midnight. As for Philip, he was evidently not trusted to undertake so important a duty. He collected a great deal of straw from the stables, piled this up in the corner of an empty room, and lying down on the top of it, was soon fast asleep. He was awakened, at about midnight, by a shot, and

loud shouts from one of the soldiers, who was too excited to make himself intelligible. Rushing into the room, he grasped Philip by the arm, and dragged him to his feet.

"Turks!" he cried. "Turks!"

Philip ran into the yard, and immediately a bullet whistled past his ear and splintered the woodwork of a door at his back. It was a clear night; many stars were out. One of the outbuildings was on fire, and the whole scene was flooded with a lurid light. Philip was able to see quite distinctly the figure of a man lying upon his face upon the ground, about ten yards from the door.

Regardless of the bullets which seemed to come from all directions, Philip rushed to this fellow, and tried to lift him up. It was apparent at once that his efforts would be useless, for the body was limp in death. It was the soldier who had agreed to keep watch throughout the later part of the night.

Philip took in a deep breath, like a man about to dive, and then ran for the stables. He had not gone ten paces before he was greeted by a volley. White jets of fire flashed from between the farm buildings. The whole place had fallen into the hands of a Turkish reconnoitring patrol.

Philip, turning to the right, found his way impeded once again. He then made for a large haystack, and had almost gained cover behind this when a man sprang upon his shoulders, and hurled him to the ground. He was on his feet again in an instant, struck out with his fist, and caught the fellow under the chin, so that he went down with a groan. And then, he ran for his life.

A moment later, he was splashing through the mud, which was well above his ankles, rushing blindly onward under the stars, with no idea whither he was going, and the bullets droning past him like a swarm of bees.

Philip, turning to the right, found his
[illegible] again. He [illegible] made for [illegible]
[illegible] and had almost gained cover be-
[illegible] when a boat sprang over his shoulder
[illegible] to the ground. He was on her
again in an instant, struck out with his fist,
caught the fellow under the chin, so that
went down with a groan. And then, he
for his life.

A moment later, he was splashing there
the mad wretch was well above his ank
rushing blindly onward under the stars, with
idea whither he was going, and the bal
droning past him like a swarm of bees

CHAPTER XI

TOWARDS THE GUNS

For how long he ran, or what distance he covered, Philip was never able to say. He went on and on, until he could go no farther. Then, panting and exhausted, he flung himself upon the ground.

At length, he recovered his breath. Listening, he could hear nothing in the night. The Turks had evidently given up the chase.

A period of intense excitement is as often as not followed by a reaction. Philip found himself in the mood—and indeed, he had ample time—to reflect.

His situation was not of the pleasantest. One of the soldiers in charge of him had been killed, and the other was either killed or captured. The Bulgarian general's letter to General Savoff had fallen into the hands of the Turks. There was a chance that the Turkish soldiers would not be able to read it, and a still greater chance that they would not take the trouble to put the document into the hands of an officer; but, in

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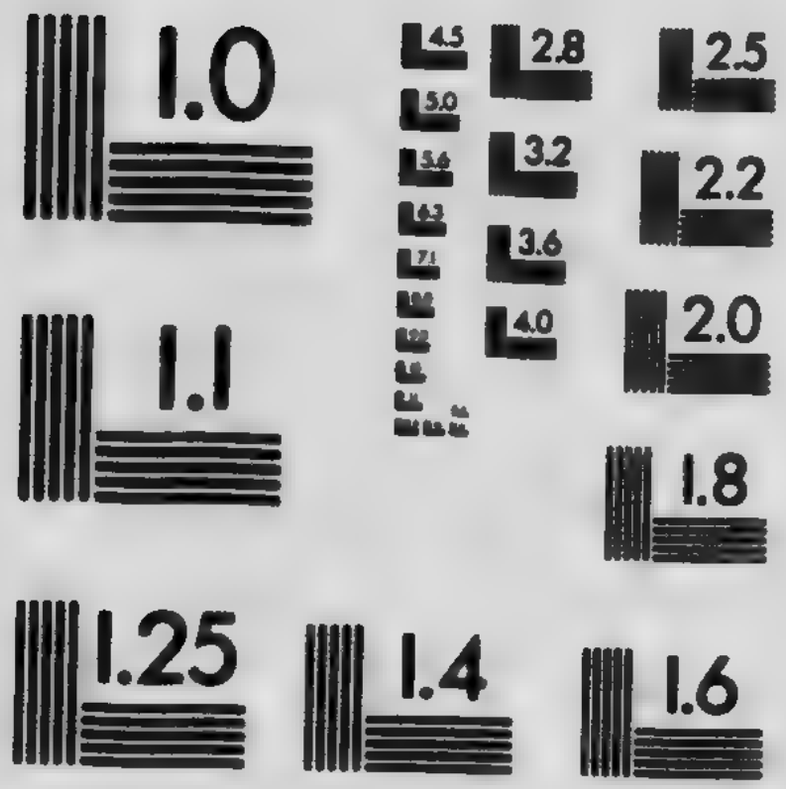

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any case, Philip was deprived of his only passport and credentials. He would have to account to General Savoff for his presence at the front. Neither was that the greatest of his difficulties: he had first to find the Bulgarian head-quarters, and he had no notion as to where he was. It was too cold and wet to remain seated on the ground; so, desiring to waste no time, he set out on foot, guiding his course by the stars.

He had not traversed a mile before he came to a river which was quite unfordable. He walked northward in the hope of finding a bridge, and then came back again to the point whence he had started, and walked several miles to the south. It was broad daylight when he succeeded in crossing the river, and followed a cart-track, which soon after joined a road. There, he came upon a cart, drawn by a pair of oxen, proceeding eastward at the rate of about a mile an hour. The oxen were driven by an old grey-beard Turk; and seated in the cart, upon all their household belongings, was his young and beautiful wife, whose veil had been cast aside.

When the usual salutations had passed between them, Philip asked the old man where he was going.

He shrugged his shoulders, and threw out his hands. "I do not know," said he.

"Where have you come from?" asked Philip.

"From Godera. There was my home. But we heard the Bulgarians were coming. We saw villages in flames to the north. Years ago, I fought against the Russians; but now I am an old man—too old to take up arms. We shall probably go to Rodosto. There we will wait until the Bulgarians are driven from the country."

"And what if the Bulgarians are not driven away?" asked Philip.

"Then," said the old Turk, "we will cross into Asia. The will of God be done. Perhaps it is our fate that we go back to the land of our forefathers. We have been in Europe for six hundred years, and those have been years of trouble and war and incessant strife. Asia is our home."

Bearing the old man company, Philip walked on in silence for some minutes. There was something splendid in the fortitude of the Turk, even in this old man who, with his young wife, fled before the conqueror. If the Turk's belief in Fate, or *kismet*, is responsible for much of his ineptitude, or laziness, it, at least, gives

him strength to withstand disaster and to bear his sorrows like a man.

"And you?" said he. "Whither are you going? You are young. Your legs can carry you far."

"I, also, do not know," said Philip. Nor indeed had he the least notion in what direction he was going. That he was travelling either east or south was obvious; but, it was another grey, cloudy day; there was no sun to guide him. He could not tell the Turk that he wished to find his way to Kirk Kilisse, for the old man would probably know that the Bulgarians were there. He thought it best to gather what information he could by asking questions.

"What road is this?" he said.

"This is the road to Constantinople. We are about ten miles west of Baba Eski."

"So far south as that!" cried Philip, unable to conceal his surprise.

"The further south, the better," said the old man. "The Bulgarians are to the north. Neither are they far away from here. Last night, a man passed us on the road who told us that Adrianople was besieged."

Philip was dismayed to find that he had

come so far out of his way. He was evidently about twenty miles south-west of the point he wished to gain. He made up his mind to bid good-bye to the old man on the first available opportunity, and to follow some stream that flowed from the north, and which must eventually lead him to the road which runs almost due west from Kirk Kilisse. And no doubt he would have carried out his intention, had not a most untoward accident occurred.

The cart was crossing a small stream, where the wheels sank to the axle-trees, and they were brought to a sudden halt. The old man lashed his oxen with the whip, but the poor animals were too fatigued to drag the cart free, and after struggling and floundering in the mire, one of them went down upon its knees, and refused to rise. The hot breath was pumping from its strained, dilated nostrils. Its eyes were wild, with a fierceness that is sometimes seen in the eyes of those patient beasts of burden when they are asked to do too much.

Regardless of his wife's presence, the old Turk swore in a language replete with oaths.

"We must unload," said he, "and give the oxen a rest. No doubt you will lend a hand."

Philip could not find it in his heart to refuse.

He had not yet learnt the stern rule of war, that each man must look after his own affairs, steeling his heart to the sufferings of others. During the days to follow, he became callous, even selfish. It had to be so. He learnt to realise that to help one was mere folly when there were so many thousands who stood in equal need of help. As yet, however, he knew nothing of the relentlessness of war. Here was an old man and a young woman in trouble, and he was in honour bound to help them.

They unloaded the cart, and Philip himself carried the bundles and packages, one by one, across the stream. This all took time. It was long past midday when the cart was empty. Then the Turk offered the young Englishman a meal; and as he had had nothing to eat since the previous evening at the farm, Philip was glad enough to accept the old man's hospitality.

It was two o'clock, when Philip wished these wayfarers good-bye, and set out towards the north. He did not know it then, but this old man and his wife were but the forerunners of a deluge. Within the next fortnight the whole peninsula, from the Black Sea to the Marmora, would be overrun by thousands of panic-stricken

fugitives, homeless and starving, fleeing for their lives before the great tidal wave of invasion.

At four o'clock, the rain came down in torrents. Philip had never seen rain anything like it. It was as if the water descended in a single sheet. For some time he stumbled on, looking about him vainly for a place of shelter, and at last he sighted a small shepherd's hut.

Here he remained for some hours, until the rain had ceased. He was then brought to realise the awkwardness of his situation. It would be folly to endeavour to find his way to Kirk Kilisse by night. During the afternoon he had heard the sound of heavy firing to the north, and it was doubtless this that had brought down the rain. At nightfall, however, all was silent and dark; there was neither firing nor moon to guide him. On the other hand, if he remained where he was, he had small chance of obtaining any sleep. He was drenched to the skin; he had no food.

He was considering what was best to do, when Nature took the matter out of his hands. On a sudden, he felt overcome with a feeling of weakness, and was obliged to lie down upon the ground. Almost instantly he fell asleep.

It was daylight when he awoke with a start.

For a moment he imagined that a thunderstorm was passing over the hut. He rose to his feet and went on, and was surprised to see that the day was sunny and bright, with a touch of frost in the air. A few miles to the north, a cannonade was taking place that seemed to cause the very heavens to shake.

He set off walking as fast as he could, only too glad to warm the blood in his veins. He had no doubt as to which direction to take. The sun had risen in the east; the firing came from the north.

The country was still the same down-like wasteland he had traversed since leaving Adrianople. At times, from points of eminence, it was possible to see for distances of one or two miles. He had been walking for about two hours when, from a hilltop, he observed a solitary figure, coming towards him on foot.

He quickened his steps, and soon came up with this man, whom he found to be a soldier who, bleeding from a great shell wound in the neck, was dragging himself forward with difficulty. Philip asked the man who he was and to what regiment he belonged. The soldier answered that his battalion formed part of the first division in Yavir Pasha's Army Corps.

"Where are they fighting?" asked Philip.

"At Jenidze," said the man, "south of Kirk Kilisse."

"I thought," said Philip, "that the First Army Corps was concentrated at Kirk Kilisse."

"Our forces were driven out of Kirk Kilisse the day before yesterday," answered the soldier. "The firing was terrific. It was impossible to stop the Bulgarians. They came on regardless of death. The slopes of the hills were covered with their dead."

"And to-day?" asked Philip. "How goes the fight to-day?"

"We are being beaten," said the Turk. "The Bulgarians came up to our position yesterday afternoon, and attacked almost immediately. They outnumbered us. Their artillery fire is [illegible]. We waited for hours for reinforcements which never arrived. At nightfall, we were holding our own. This morning, they renewed the attack, and I was wounded. I looked for a hospital, or a field dressing-station, and could find nothing. There was no one to attend to my wounds. Also, for two days, I have had no food. I am sick of it. I am going home—to my home on the Marmora Coast. If I cannot reach it, I will die on the road. Some-

one, perhaps, will bury me. The will of Allah be done."

Philip passed on his way, telling the soldier that he hoped he would reach the coast in safety, where his wife would be able to nurse him. As he walked forward, he considered the full significance of the news the man had told him.

As we have said, to a very large degree the fate of the Turkish forces was in the hands of Yavir Pasha. It was the First Army Corps that guarded the lines of communication between Adrianople and the base. In the ranks of this army were some of the finest troops that Turkey possessed. The success of General Savoff's plan of campaign depended upon the force with which he delivered these initial blows upon Kirk Kilisse and Jenidze. It was the battle of Jenidze, on the evening of the twenty-fourth, and the morning of the twenty-fifth of October, that sealed the fate of the Turks.

The defeat of the First Army Corps was a terrible and unexpected blow to the military authorities and the government at Constantinople. The fact, which could not be concealed, served to shake the confidence of the troops. The importance of gaining the Baba Eski road

has been explained. It has been shown that, if this important junction fell into the hands of the Bulgarians, Adrianople would be cut off. General Savoff intended to take as little risk as possible—though a large degree of risk is inevitable in war. It was one of Napoleon's maxims that the best general is the luckiest one—a maxim that is beyond dispute. Savoff, however, trusted rather to the heroism of his men, and the vast preponderance and superiority of his artillery, rather than to luck. At the point of the bayonet, under cover of a perfect hail of shells, the Bulgarians ousted the Turks from Kirk Kilisse, and drove the much-vaunted First Army Corps from the hills between Kavakli and Jenidze back upon the railway line.

As Philip continued on his way, the disaster that had befallen the Ottoman Empire became more and more apparent. The road he followed was a narrow footpath, leading from village to village, which became more and more thronged with fugitives and wounded. Later in the morning the firing ceased—which told the story, as plainly as any words, that the battle had been won and lost. As to which side had proved victorious, there could be no doubt; for, presently, Philip climbed a hill and looked

down upon a wide valley literally choked with an army in full retreat.

Far to the east, extended a multitude of men, hurrying on their way. Hundreds had thrown themselves upon the ground, to die from wounds or exhaustion, or fall into the hands of the invader. A small rear-guard was endeavouring to cover the retreat; and the sound of musketry to the north was like the crackle of brushwood on a fire. Batteries retired at the gallop. The wheels of the guns sank deep in the quagmires; and several pieces were abandoned. It was a scene of turmoil, of desolation and confusion.

And yet, the whole army was not demoralised. There were several regiments that kept the ranks, followed by their own transport, toiling southward in column of route. A brigade of cavalry appeared on the crestline of a neighbouring hill. The squadrons were in perfect order; the long lines of horses were as straight as on the parade-ground; each squadron was headed by the squadron leader.

Philip found himself enveloped by the retreat. Both upon the road he followed and upon parallel roads on either side, fugitives and refugees were streaming past. No one spoke to him, though many looked at him in amaze-

ment, since he—a wearer of the fez, and to all appearances a Turk—was walking deliberately into the lion's mouth, towards the Bulgarians in pursuit.

After a while, the rear-guard was passed, and this distressing spectacle came to an end. Philip could see nothing before him but the wide, undulating downs—the same as ever, with this difference: now the landscape was dotted with broken wagons and disabled guns, with baggage cast aside in the panic of retirement, and dying and wounded men. It was terrible to have to pass these sufferers by the wayside, to be able to do nothing to help them, to think that somewhere in the Turkish Empire, wives, mothers, and children were anxiously awaiting their return. Philip Thornton was learning something of the cruel nature of war.

He climbed a hilltop; and as he reached the crest, a bullet came singing past his ears. It was quickly followed by another that struck the ground a few inches from his feet. On the spur of the moment, he threw himself down upon his face.

The grass happened to be long; and it was some consolation to know that he was hidden from view. On the other hand, he could see

nothing himself; nor had he any warning that riders were upon him, until he heard the clattering of horses' hoofs.

He looked up, and a harsh voice ordered him to hold up his hands. He had no option but to obey; and indeed, before he had time to do so, a third bullet passed so close to him that he could feel the motion of the air upon his cheek. A moment later, he was seized roughly from behind.

He protested he was a non-combatant, that he had been sent from the Bulgarian army south of Mustafa Pasha with a message to General Savoff—two assertions somewhat contradictory. At any rate, he was not believed. The soldiers laughed in his face.

He repeated that it was necessary for him to see the Bulgarian Chief of Staff. And at that, one of the troopers, turning to his comrades, gave it as his opinion that the prisoner was a Moslem fanatic, who intended to murder the general.

These Bulgarians were no more than a party of advanced scouts. Since they were not under the command of an officer, they were in some doubt as to what to do. After a consultation, they decided to send one of their number in

charge of the prisoner back to the head-quarters of their regiment.

A short rope was produced, and this was tied round Philip's neck. The other end was made fast to the strap of a saddle-bag. And then the Bulgarian mounted, and ordered Philip to run.

That was one of the most terrible experiences that Philip Thornton ever underwent. He was weak, starving, and exhausted. Yet he had to keep pace with a trotting horse. If he stumbled or fell, the slip-knot would be drawn tighter around his neck, and he would be hanged.

Burning with indignation, he was determined not to give in. Clenching his teeth, he strained every nerve, exerted every muscle in his body, to come through this terrible ordeal. The Bulgarian trooper never once looked at his prisoner. He seemed utterly indifferent to the torture he was inflicting. As he rode forward he actually hummed a tune.

Before Philip came to the end of his journey, the long-backed hills before him, beyond which the sun was setting in a purple glow, were all dancing in a haze. He could see nothing clearly. Even the lean, trotting horse, a few inches from his elbow, was distorted and indistinct. He

remembered seeing vaguely long lines of horses, of little tents, of burning fires, and wagons, all of which appeared to be moving as in a mirage, such as is seen upon a stifling summer's day. The horse stopped with a jerk. For a moment, Philip looked into the face of a tall man with a grey beard and moustache, dressed in the uniform of a Bulgarian cavalry colonel. Then, he remembered no more.

CHAPTER XII

SEALED ORDERS

WHEN Philip came to his senses, it was dark. Lifting himself upon an elbow, he looked about him.

He was lying upon a heap of straw, piled under a wagon. All about him were horses. He could hear snorting and the stamping of hoofs upon the ground. Slowly he began to crawl from underneath the wagon, and immediately a loud voice cried out to him to halt. A bayonet shot out of the darkness, and glistened in the starlight, the point directed at his chest.

He sank back with a groan of despair.

It may have been that there was such anguish in his tones as would have melted a heart of flint; or perhaps this sentry was more good-natured than the trooper who had brought him to camp. At any rate, the man took from his haversack a biscuit, which he broke in half.

"There," said he, "this is all I have."

Philip thanked him, and asked for water; and

the sentry lent him his water-bottle, which he drained to the last drop. Then, when Philip had eaten his half of the biscuit, he lay down once again upon the straw, and fell asleep.

Soon after dawn, he was awakened by a great commotion on every hand. The wagons were being loaded and the horses saddled; the tents had been struck. The Bulgarian advanced guard was about to resume the line-of-march.

A sergeant appeared, with a file of the guard, and told the prisoner to follow him. Philip asked whither he was being led, but the man would vouchsafe no answer. Presently, they came to a tent—the only tent that was now standing. Within, seated at a small camp-table, was the colonel whom Philip remembered to have seen on the previous evening before he fainted.

"I am told," said the colonel with a smile, speaking in Turkish, "that you desire to see General Savoff."

Philip answered that that was so.

"A very natural wish," said the colonel. It was obvious that he had some difficulty in preventing himself from laughing.

"I must tell you, sir," said Philip, "that I am an Englishman; that a few weeks ago I was in Sofia, sharing lodgings with Lieutenant Boris

Petroff. I was frequently at the officers' club. I have been recently in Adrianople, where I came across Petroff, disguised as a Turk, and was able to render him valuable assistance. Three days ago I had an interview with the colonel commanding the Bulgarian advanced guard on the road from Mustafa Pasha. I was sent by him, in charge of two orderlies, with an important letter to the Chief of Staff. We fell in with a reconnoitring party of the enemy. One of the orderlies was killed. I myself managed to escape. There is every reason to believe that the letter, which contained important information, fell into the hands of the Turks."

As may be imagined, the Bulgarian cavalry leader was not a little surprised at this statement. He found it difficult to believe.

"But you *are* a Turk!" he exclaimed.

"I assure you, sir," said Philip, "I am an Englishman. My story is perfectly true. If you send me to the head-quarters of the Bulgarian Staff, I shall be greatly obliged. If you do not, I cannot say what will happen to me. I have suffered such indignities, and have received such harsh treatment, that I am so weak I can hardly stand."

Now, for the first time, the colonel looked alarmed.

"Perhaps," said he, "there has been some slight mistake." He looked at Philip, and saw that the young man's last words, at any rate, were true. Philip actually swayed as he talked, and was even obliged to support himself by placing a hand upon the table.

At once, the colonel stepped out of the tent.

"Quick!" said he to the sergeant. "A doctor."

A moment later, a man entered the tent who wore upon his arm the white band with a red cross that signifies a member of the medical profession in time of war. He gave one glance at Philip's face, and then felt his pulse.

"This man," said he, "is on the point of dropping from sheer fatigue and hunger."

"You are going back with the sick convoy?" asked the colonel.

"At once," said the doctor.

"Then take him with you. I will give you a letter to the Chief of Staff. He tells a remarkable story which ought to be inquired into. Personally, I do not believe a word of it. Still, some of it may be true."

Then followed the only days throughout all this eventful period that Philip Thornton spent in comparative comfort. The doctor gave him some brandy which immediately revived much of his former strength. He did the journey to the head-quarters of the Bulgarian army, which lay some miles to the south-east of Jenidze, in a hospital wagon; and though the roads were exceedingly rough, and the wagon jolted considerably, he managed to sleep most of the way. On arrival at his destination, where he found a great army encamped, he was given a tent to himself and supplied liberally with food. It was no hardship to him that he was forbidden to leave his tent, for he desired nothing than to be allowed to eat and sleep.

In two days he had completely recovered, and felt strong enough to go anywhere. He actually chafed at the restraint which had been placed upon him. He could no longer fall asleep at a moment's notice. He desired only his freedom.

This came at midday in the form of an officer of the General Staff, who shook him warmly by the hand.

"I have come to apologise," said he, "for the treatment you received three days ago. It was a pitiful mistake. But," he added, "if

you wander into our outposts, disguised as a Turk, and wearing a fez, what can you expect?"

"Then my story is believed?" asked Philip.

"We know it to be true," said the officer. "Last night, one of the two orderlies who were put in charge of you managed to reach camp. He had been captured by the Turks at the farm-house when you escaped. His comrade was killed. He brought with him the letter to the Chief of the Staff from Colonel Sarovitch. The general will see you this afternoon."

Philip was not destined to interview General Savoff himself; but, shortly after he had finished a luncheon of roast meat and excellent Roumanian wine, he was conducted into the presence of a staff-officer of distinction.

"The general himself is unable to see you," said the staff-officer, motioning Philip to a chair. "He asked me to make his apologies to you for the treatment you have received, and to assure you that it was all a mistake. In regard to your difficulties, I think I am in possession of the full facts of the case. You are a friend of Petroff's, are you not?"

Philip answered that he was.

"Petroff is at present in the hands of a gang

of gipsies, who, under the impression that the prisoner is you, demand a ransom for his life."

"That is so," said Philip.

"Very well, then," said the officer, "you are willing to risk your life to save your friend?"

"I am."

"That is good. We also would like to see this young and promising officer return in safety to his regiment. However, there is something of greater importance to the cause of Bulgaria than the life of an infantry subaltern. I refer to his dispatches which you hid in a ruined wall."

The officer leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, and looked at Philip with a searching glance.

"I understand," said he, "you are not altogether hostile to the Turks."

"On the contrary," said Philip; "from what I have seen of them, I like them. Mistakes have occurred, of course; but, on the whole, I have met with nothing but courtesy and kindness at their hands."

"As you say," said the Bulgarian, "they are an excellent people. I also like them.

We have no quarrel with the Turks as men; we object only to their methods of government. However, in war one must not be squeamish. There are ends to be attained. If possible, I am going to strike a bargain with you. I will put it in your power to save young Petroff's life, if you will promise to do your utmost to bring back the dispatches."

"It is a strange bargain!" cried Philip, amazed at the cold-blooded manner in which the proposal was made.

The officer was unmoved.

"The dispatches are more important than Petroff's life. Your gallant friend himself would be the first to say so. We can rescue Petroff without difficulty. The gipsies have arranged all that. But we cannot get at the dispatches without your help, because nobody but yourself knows where they are."

"And if I refuse," asked Philip, "will you let Petroff die?"

"By no means. We shall first rescue him from the gipsies; and we shall then send him back into the city to try to find the dispatches himself. Without your assistance, he will find that difficult. If he fails, and falls into the hands of the enemy, he will, of course, be shot.

Now, tell me, are we to act with or without your help?"

"Naturally," said Philip, "I will do all within my power."

"I am sure you will," said the officer. "The word of an English gentleman is enough. And now, I will put you in possession of the full facts of the case. Here is the telegram which we have received from England."

He handed it to Philip, who first looked at the address, and saw that it had been sent to one of his uncle's greatest friends who lived in London, and from whom Sir Charles had received a letter a few days before he was murdered. It was doubtless from this letter that Barco had obtained the address. The following is not the actual wording of the letter, but the sense is retained.

"*Mister Philip Thornton is a prisoner in the hands of bandits. A ransom of five hundred pounds is demanded. If this is paid in Rodosto, on or before November the First, the prisoner will be handed over to whomever pays the ransom. If you, or Mister Thornton's friends, refuse to pay, he will be put to death. If you desire to pay the money, you can go by train from London to Constanza. There you can take ship to Rodosto,*

where you will find a man awaiting you at the end of the most easterly pier, or landing-stage. He will be seated by the side of a basket of melons, and you will be able to tell him by the red scarf he will be wearing round his waist. This man will take you to a place where you will pay over the ransom, and where the prisoner will be delivered into your hands. If nobody comes, he will die."

"You see," said the officer, laughing, "to rescue Petroff will be a very simple affair. I will give you four men — four of the finest fellows I can lay hands upon, all of whom will be able to speak Turkish. You will go to Rodosto, find your way to the pier, meet this gentleman with the red scarf, and go with him to the place where Petroff is imprisoned. Here are five hundred pounds in Bank of England notes. You will give these to the man who demands the ransom. He will require possession of them before he sets the prisoner free. However, you must let me have them back again. The Bulgarian government cannot afford to pay five hundred pounds for a subaltern, though Petroff's dispatches will be worth a great deal more than that."

"But, if I am to hand over these notes to the

man," said Philip, "how will I be able to give them back to you?"

"That will happen in the natural course of events," said the officer. "When the man with the red sash leads you away, you will be followed by my four men. Disguised as subjects of the Sultan, they will not attract the least attention. As soon as the prisoner has been set at liberty, you can trust these fine fellows to get back the money."

"And then?" asked Philip.

"And then, you will give this sealed letter to Lieutenant Petroff. It contains his orders. He is to return with you to Adrianople. Together you are to endeavour to pass the outposts and get into the town. You will lead him to the place where you have hidden his dispatches, and with these in your possession you will endeavour to return. If you fail, you will have rendered up your lives in a noble cause. If you succeed, General Savoff—and, indeed, his Majesty the King himself—will not forget the services you have rendered to Bulgaria. You see, the whole thing is going to be a dangerous business from start to end."

"I am aware of that," said Philip. "I have

been warned that I enter Adrianople again at my own risk."

"You will not find it easy to get in," said the officer. "But, are you prepared to take the risk?"

"I am," said Philip.

"Good. Needless to say, the whole business is to be kept absolutely secret. These are sealed orders. The four men who are to go with you to Rodosto will be told nothing of the dispatches. They will have done their duty when Petroff has been set at liberty. That is all."

So saying, the officer held out his hand, which Philip took. Thus was the interview concluded.

CHAPTER XIII

MR. STEED BAYLY

At daybreak the following morning, Philip Thornton set forth upon his journey to Rodosto. The four men who accompanied him were Bulgarian peasants of Macedonia who had gained their experience of warfare by serving with the armed bands during the insurrection. They were bold riders, skilled rifle shots, and could speak Turkish fluently. All were well provided with ammunition and provisions.

The enterprise upon which they were embarked was one of consummate danger. Rodosto was well within the territory still in possession of the Turks. To be found disguised beyond the enemy's outpost line was to merit death. Such is the custom of war. Philip's nationality could not protect him. By undertaking this mission, he had identified himself with the cause of the Allies; he had declared himself an enemy to the Turk.

Moreover, to reach Rodosto was no such

simple matter. The Turks, driven back from Jenidze, were in position along the line Baba Eski, Lule Burgas, Visa—that is to say, the army of Abdullah Pasha barred all roads leading southward to the coast of the Marmora Sea. Two courses, therefore, were open to Philip and his escort: first, to ride west, towards Adrianople, passing round the left flank of the Ottoman army; secondly, to take the shorter, and far more dangerous, route, by endeavouring to pass the Turkish outposts immediately to the south.

We are now upon the eve of one of the most colossal conflicts the modern world has known. The Battle of Lule Burgas deserves to rank as one of the great decisive battles that have sealed the fate of nations. By the sacking of Constantinople, six hundred years ago, the Ottoman Empire in Europe came into its own. In the stricken valley of the Karagach, amid the thunder of the Bulgarian artillery, the curtain was rung down upon the drama of Islam, during these bleak October days.

Our adventurers were well upon the road by the time the sun had risen above the dark, tree-covered slopes of the Istranja Balkans, which form the watershed of the Thracian peninsula.

They moved at a trot across the rear of the Bulgarian position.

Already the battle had begun. From three directions the sound of cannon—the dull roar of big guns firing, followed by the sharp "thudding" sound of bursting shells—came to the ears of the riders. In the direction of Visa, the Bulgarian left wing already engaged the Third Army Corps under Mahmoud Mukhtar, one of the most capable of the Turkish commanders. In the centre of the line, a fierce artillery duel was taking place between the batteries of the First Turkish Army Corps and the Bulgarians on the hills above Turk Bey. But, even at this early hour of the morning, the fight raged fiercest in the south, around the little town of Lule Burgas.

Here General Savoff seemed to have concentrated the majority of his batteries; for the firing was audible as one continuous roar, and the smoke from the bursting shrapnel rose high in the air, as if from some mighty conflagration.

In modern warfare, the main principles of tactics are very simple to understand. All great battles, since the invention of explosives, have begun in much the same manner, though recent improvements in firearms have widely affected

the formations and dispositions of troops. A line of defence for an army of a hundred thousand men can hardly be less than thirty miles from flank to flank, because the attack will be developed on that frontage. An army, on approaching a hostile position, opens out like a fan—or, to speak more correctly, like several fans, for a great force cannot move in a single column. These "fans" endeavour to enfold, or outflank, the extremities of the defence; whereupon, the defence extends its arms on either side to prevent the enemy creeping round upon its rear. Finally, there comes a time when neither side can stretch itself further towards the flanks without weakening the centre. Then the action begins.

The attack opens with what is known as the "Preparation by Artillery." By means of concentrated artillery fire, the attacking force endeavours to find out the weak points in the line of defence, and to shake the *moral*, or confidence, of the enemy at the place where the infantry assault is to be delivered.

On this Tuesday morning of the twenty-ninth of October, there was no doubt as to the objective of the main Bulgarian attack. Before the Turks had time to reinforce their left, the

thunderbolt had fallen upon the town of Lule Burgas. Philip and his escort, coming suddenly upon the crest-line of a hill, looked down upon a wide, sweeping valley, entirely destitute of cover, where the whole drama was being enacted.

In mid-valley was the town of Lule Burgas, with the tall, slender minarets of a mosque rising above the tops of neighbouring trees. Upon the town four roads converged, two of which could be seen ascending the slopes on the opposite side of the valley, into the heart of the Turkish position. About four miles to the south was the railway station; and east of that they could see the great iron bridge where the permanent way from Constantinople to Vienna spanned the Ergene River.

It was as if Lule Burgas was in flames. The entire population, panic-stricken, were flying for their lives to the east. The two roads across the valley were thronged with fugitives. The town itself was visible only at intervals, when the clouds of smoke cleared upon the wind. The air was alive with shells. From Lule Burgas to the railway station there was a kind of storm upon the face of a plain of meadow-land and ploughed fields. The valley was traversed from end to end by rolling waves

of smoke. The flashes of bursting shrapnel were like phosphorus in the sea. Common shell from Creusot and Maxim-Nordenfeldt hurled upward earth, rock, and brickwork in lines of savage fountains. It seemed impossible that anyone could live in the midst of it; and yet, invisible, one solitary Turkish regiment, ordered to hold on at every cost, waiting for reinforcements, stubbornly refused to retire.

Neither Philip nor the Bulgarians who accompanied him thought any more of their journey to Rodosto. It was as if they were rooted to the spot. They could not take their eyes from the spectacle, at once glorious and appalling, that was taking place in the valley at their feet.

There is something magnetic in war. In man, the fighting instinct still survives so strongly that the sound of guns, and the sight of men marching shoulder to shoulder into the jaws of death, appeal to primitive emotions. There is nothing in the world so singularly dramatic as the field of battle. In everyone of us there is a little of the gambler; and it is the greatest gamble that ever can be, when Life itself is the stake. Upon this field of Lule Burgas, an empire was in jeopardy. If Philip

felt inclined to gallop down into the valley and take part in the action itself, the temptation to remain upon that hill and watch the engrossing current of events was completely irresistible.

Suddenly, long lines of Bulgarian infantry sprang, as it were by magic, from the ground. They had been lying under cover throughout the early hours of the morning, awaiting the moment to advance. They were formed in two columns. The left column bore down upon the town. The other wheeled to the right, and drove forward upon the railway station and the bridge.

Musketry fire broke out along the Turkish firing-line, as a wave breaks upon a beach, running from flank to flank. The batteries redoubled their efforts: from one end of the valley to the other, smoke and dust arose like steam, in the midst of which the white flashes of the bursting shells were like sparks in the wind, that appear, glitter, and vanish.

On the eastern slopes of the valley the fugitives were still visible. Philip had been provided with a pair of field-glasses, and with the help of these he was able to witness a scene of inordinate confusion. The roads were blocked by the inhabitants of Lule Burgas: men, women, and

children; carts, wagons, and pack animals; wounded men, dragging themselves with difficulty and in pain to the rear, and half-starved, panic-stricken soldiers who had thrown down their arms and taken to headlong flight. Though the great battle was as yet in its infancy, and the result by no means certain, the headlong flight to Constantinople had begun.

One of the Bulgarians laid a hand on Philip's shoulder, and then pointed to the hills to the east.

"If we could but cross the valley," said he, "we could take part in the retreat. They are all terrified, those people. Everyone is thinking only of his own safety, of himself. No questions would be asked. We could ride straight through to Rodosto, and reach the town to-night."

This caused Philip to remember the object of his journey. It was already the twenty-ninth; if they were not in Rodosto by November the first, Boris would be put to death. He did not know how far he would have to ride to the west in order to pass round the left flank of the Turkish position. It occurred to him that he and his companions might attach themselves to some Bulgarian infantry regiment, moving forward in support. Thence, they might be

able to take advantage of the conformation of the ground to join the Turkish retreat.

"I am willing to take the risk," said he, in answer to the man who had spoken.

The three others instantly agreed. They seemed to hold their lives of little account; and all five moved down into the valley.

Presently, they came up with the reserves of the Bulgarian brigade which was advancing on Lule Burgas. They kept as much to the left as possible, knowing that in the vicinity of the railway line there was but one bridge across the river, whereas, to the north, the smaller, tributary streams were fordable on horseback.

The staff-officer had given Philip a letter, explaining his identity, and instructing all brigadiers and commanders of regiments to do their utmost to assist him to reach the Turkish position. The general who was conducting the assault advised them to bear to the north. He said that their only hope was to break through between the First and Fourth Turkish Army Corps. He considered the enterprise quite impracticable by daylight, but thought they would have no difficulty in crossing after nightfall.

This, indeed, seemed the wisest plan. Taking advantage of the cover afforded by the small

stream that flows to the west of Turk Bey, they dismounted, and led their horses northward. They were now in the very heart of the conflict. Shells shrieked in the air from either side of the valley. Bullets sped past—each with a soft, two-noted whistle, like the chirping of a bird—to bury themselves in the soft earth, or ricochet with a sound like that which is made by tearing paper. The noise was deafening. Though no sign of life was to be seen, the musketry swelled on every hand in one long, continuous roar. They were midway between the opposing batteries, and each cannon-shot threatened to break the drums of their ears. On the Bulgarian side, machine-guns rattled without ceasing; and high above them—too high to be effective—the Turks exploded their shrapnel, so that white clouds of smoke went drifting southward on the wind.

Philip was beginning to think that the Bulgarian general was right; that they would have to wait for darkness, when they came upon a gully, or dried-up watercourse, that led due east to the centre of the Ottoman position. They followed this for some distance, leading their horses with difficulty over the uneven, broken ground; and presently, they came

within sight of the Turkish firing-line. Philip, with the aid of his glasses, was able to ascertain that these men were not firing in their direction. Their rifles were pointed to the north, where doubtless the central Bulgarian attack was taking place.

Now was the time to make a bid for their goal. If they could but gain that hilltop, a fair road would lie before them to Rodosto. It was one of the Bulgarians who suggested that they should mount and urge their horses forward at a gallop.

A few yards farther on, they came forth at the head of the gully, and before them was a treeless, grassy slope across which they must run the gauntlet for a distance of about seven hundred yards.

They were immediately sighted by the Turks who, to their intense relief, hesitated to open fire. For a moment, they thought they were safe. And then it became apparent that their danger lay in the Bulgarian batteries and battalions ranged upon the western slopes of the valley.

There was every reason for the blunder. They were disguised as Turks; they had already almost succeeded in gaining the Turkish

position. They were mistaken, no doubt, for scouts, driven in by the advancing Bulgarian infantry. A perfect stream of bullets whistled past them. As they galloped for their lives, a battery, pushed forward to the mid-valley, caught sight of them, and opened fire.

To Philip Thornton it seemed, at the time, that those brief moments must surely be his last. There was a sound in his ears like that of steam, as the bullets rushed past. On every hand were the flashes of bursting shrapnel, great clouds of dust and smoke, and the fiendish shrieking of living shells. Then, on a sudden, there was a white flame at his horse's head. He was thrown violently from the saddle—hurled through the air, to fall at full length upon the ground.

For some seconds, he could see nothing, but dust and smoke. He lay motionless, not daring to lift his head; and after a while, the bullets were silent and the shells ceased to burst.

Lifting himself upon an arm, he beheld the disaster that had befallen him. He and his companions had come forth from the gully in a crowd. They had had no time to open out; and a shell had burst in their midst.

Four of the five horses lay dead, and the

other was kicking frantically on the ground, unable to get to its feet. Philip was able to see only two of the four men who had formed his escort; and on these he had no desire to look for longer than a moment. They had been literally blown to pieces.

Then, he became aware of loud shouts above him, and looking upward, he beheld the Turkish soldiers on the hill, calling to him to make haste and join their ranks.

He got to his feet, surprised to find himself unhurt, and ran as fast as he could. The battery did not open fire upon him. Doubtless, the gunners thought that a single fugitive was not worth the expenditure of ammunition. He was fired at by riflemen, it is true; but, these were under fire themselves, and at long range, so that accurate shooting was impossible.

He came upon a party of Turkish infantry, lying on their faces, behind the cover afforded by a shelter trench. He moved towards them, but they told him to go away, saying that he was without a rifle, and that there was no more room in the trench. Bullets were singing past their ears.

Philip wished for nothing better than to take himself from the hills. He was, in fact, as

anxious to get out of the battle as he had been to get into it—which sentiment was entirely human, after all. It is one thing to be stirred by brave deeds, to behold war in all its pomp and magnificence, to feel one's blood rushing through one's veins with a monstrous roar of cannon in one's ears; it is another matter to find oneself armed only with a revolver—a mere running target for riflemen and guns. Philip bore straight ahead with all dispatch, and was soon relieved to find himself going downhill again, so that the bullets were flying harmlessly far above his head.

Before him was another valley, narrower than the first. Here a regiment of Turkish infantry was lying in support, ready to take its place in the firing-line. On the crest-line of the hills above, several batteries were in action, directing their fire upon the Bulgarian guns to the west.

As Philip ascended the hill, he caught sight of the most northerly of the two roads that converged at Lule Burgas. Hereabouts was a village, and upon an adjacent hilltop he saw a large flag upon which was the Crescent. Around the flag was a small group of officers, everyone of whom had his glasses raised to his eyes.

Having no wish to be questioned, Philip bore to the left, keeping a little below the crest-line. He now had time to consider his situation. He had his revolver and a certain amount of money and ammunition, but he had neither food, nor horse, nor any idea as to how he was to reach Rodosto. He knew only that the seaport town was, at the very least, forty-five miles distant from Lule Burgas. He had already experienced the difficulties of travelling on foot in a country with few roads, in which he was a total stranger. It appeared that alone he would have small chance of reaching Rodosto in time to save Boris from his fate.

There was no help for it: he would have to speak to someone, and run the risk of detection. If by any chance he was suspected and searched, the two letters of the Bulgarian staff officer would be found upon him, and he would be shot at sight as a spy. Whilst these thoughts were passing through his mind, he caught sight of the solitary figure of a man upon a hilltop. A saddled horse was near at hand, grazing upon the rank grass that grew upon the uplands, totally indifferent to the shells that burst around it. It was with a heart beating quickly in suspense that Philip walked in the direction of

this man, with the object of finding out, by indirect means, where he could procure a horse.

As Philip approached, the man turned round, and asked him in excellent French if he had seen anything of the battle. Philip was too surprised to answer, for he saw at once that the speaker was an Englishman, who, moreover, made no attempt to disguise the fact.

This gentleman was dressed in khaki of a military cut, but with plain leather buttons and no badges of rank. He wore puttees, and around his neck a white hunting-stock, with a gold safety-pin. From his shoulders depended a haversack and a water-bottle, the case of a pair of field-glasses he held in his hand, and a large-sized folding camera.

"You are an Englishman!" cried Philip, speaking in his own language for the first time for many weeks.

"What do I look like? A Bashibazouk! But, surely, you're not a Britisher, too?"

Philip was so glad to have found one of his own countrymen, that forthwith he blurted out the truth, and then endeavoured to minimise the risk he had taken, by imploring the Englishman to keep his secret.

"I'm an Englishman," said he; "but, for

mercy's sake, don't say a word to anyone! I must get to Rodosto to-morrow, if not to-night."

The Englishman thrust his field-glasses into their case, produced an eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye. Then, for fully a minute, without uttering a word, he examined Philip from head to foot.

"I don't know you," said he. "To the best of my belief, I never saw you in my life."

"There's no reason why you should have seen me," answered Philip.

"I don't know," answered the other, with a shrug, and then added the most irrelevant remark; "Fleet Street is very small."

"Fleet Street!" exclaimed Philip. Whereat the Englishman stamped his foot impatiently.

"Don't look as if you had never heard the name in your life!" he cried. "You can't fool me. I positively can't be fooled. What paper do you represent? By Jove! the *Daily Gazette* would pay some money to get you. The chap who can dress himself up as a Turk, and wander about the battlefield, looking like a stray lamb, is worth a bit in these days of press censors and doctored official reports. You're a new hand, too, or I would know your face."

"I give you my word of honour," said Philip, "that I am no more a war-correspondent than a Turk. My name is Philip Thornton. I came to this country with my uncle, Sir Charles Thornton, of whom you may have heard. My uncle was murdered, and I disguised myself to avenge him. I have passed through all sorts of adventures, and must reach Rodosto, on a matter of life or death."

The Englishman dropped his eyeglass and drew out a long whistle.

"At any rate," said he, "that's frank, and to the point. I must introduce myself, and tell my story as briefly as you have told yours. My name is Steed Bayly, special war-correspondent of the *Daily Gazette*. I left Constantinople ten days ago, and found myself shut up with one or two old friends, several photographers and a cinematograph gentleman, at Chorlu. Seeing that I was not likely to get any startling intelligence by remaining at Chorlu, and being refused permission to leave camp, I rode out last night, passed the piquets, and here I am."

"And what do you propose to do?" asked Philip.

"That's my business," said the other. "You

"I give you my word of honour," said Philip, "that I am no more a war-correspondent than a Turk. My name is Philip Thornton. I came to this country with my uncle, Sir Charles Thornton, of whom you may have heard. My uncle was murdered. I disguised myself to avenge him. I have passed through all sorts of adventures, and must reach Rodosto, on a matter of life or death."

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"And what do you propose to do?" asked Philip.

"That's my business," said the other. "You

yourself—if I remember rightly—were not particularly confiding."

"I can only tell you this," said Philip, "I must go to Rodosto, to save the life of a friend. You probably have a spare horse somewhere. I propose to borrow that horse, for to reach Rodosto on foot is wellnigh impossible."

"Stop a bit!" said the war-correspondent, hastily pulling out his camera to take a snap-shot of a Turkish general and his staff, who drew rein quite near to them, watched the battle for a few minutes, and then galloped away to the north.* "Why on earth should I lend you my spare horse?" he asked, putting his camera back into its case.

"You will," said Philip, "when I tell you that this morning I left the head-quarters of the Bulgarian army. I have seen more of the battle than you could possibly have seen from here. I can tell you that two attacks are taking place in the neighbourhood of Lule Burgas; one upon the railway bridge, and the other upon the town itself. I can give you details concerning the battle of Jenidze about which—if you have just come from Chorlu—you can know nothing whatsoever. I can tell

* See illustration, facing page 96.

you that Adrianople is invested. And if these facts are not worth more to the proprietors of the *Daily Gazette* than the price of a horse, I shall go elsewhere to get one."

"My lad," cried the war-correspondent, adopting a tone of levity that seemed vastly out of place in the midst of those grim surroundings, "my lad, I have dreamed of things like this. You shall have a horse and food and golden raiment. You shall come with me to Rodosto. You shall save your friend—if he is the biggest scoundrel unhanged. And I shall make a *coup*. There's my hand on the bargain."

"Come," cried Philip, "let us start at once!"

"Oh, impetuosity, thy name is youth!" exclaimed Mr. Steed Bayly, swinging his eyeglass in his hand. "Be reasonable, my son. My part of the business has to be considered."

"You mean," said Philip, "we must wait?"

"We mean," said the war-correspondent, "that the engagement has only just begun. We mean that this is going to be one of the great battles of the world. I saw Port Arthur taken; I was present at Mukden, Pieter's Hill, Spion Kop, Colenso and Dargai; and I am not likely to leave this neighbourhood until the battle is over."

"But, that may be days!" cried Philip.

"I think not," said the other. "To-morrow night will settle the matter, one way or the other. Then, *à Rodosto!* We'll gallop every inch of it; you to your friend who lies prostrate beneath the sword of Damocles, and I—to the end of the nearest cable."

"I must be in Rodosto before the first of November," said Philip.

"My child," said Bayly in a comforting tone, "I give you my word, you shall." Then, once again, he lifted his field-glasses to his eyes. "Now, let us see," he said, "how the day goes for Turkey."

CHAPTER XIV

LULE BURGAS

THERE was never any doubt that Mr. Steed Bayly was master of the situation and quite aware of the fact. It was as if he held Philip in the hollow of his hand.

As they stood, side by side, upon that hill-top, looking down upon the battle, the war-correspondent proved the most charming of companions. His experienced eye was able to take in the ever-changing situation at a glance. He understood the movements of troops, and could tell by the nature and direction of the firing how the battle progressed. Never for one moment did he lose his almost perfect self-possession. On one occasion, when a party of fugitives were retiring in haste, a shell burst within a few yards of him and covered him with dust. When the smoke cleared, one soldier had been killed and two lay wounded on the ground; and there was Steed Bayly putting away his camera with a look of sublime satisfaction.

For the rest of the time, he played with his

SHELL BURSTING AT LULE BURGAS

(*Town of Lule Burgas visible in the distance*)

Photo by Steed Bayly, Special War Correspondent of the London Daily Graphic

eyeglass, and made the most flippant remarks. Still, for all his levity, it was obvious that he looked upon the business upon which he was engaged as the most serious matter in the world. He was a man of but one idea, and that idea was the *Daily Gazette*. That Philip should die of starvation, or that Boris Petroff should be murdered in Rodosto, was of small account in the opinion of Steed Bayly, when compared with the importance of three columns in the paper that employed him, surmounted by startling headlines.

One thing was obvious to Philip from the first: that Bayly would not leave the field until the issue of the battle was decided. He therefore determined to make the best of a bad business, and for a time the excitement of the scene he witnessed caused him to forget all about Boris and the letters he carried in his pocket.

Steed Bayly, who had taken up one of the most advantageous positions on the field, whence he was able to view a large expanse of country, explained the battle as it progressed: and whenever there was any pause in the fighting, he plied Philip with a string of questions, concerning the movements of the Bulgarians on the other side of the river, and the operations

during the last week in the direction of Mustafa Pasha. Philip—as we know—had kept his eyes open during his adventures in Thrace; and nearly every word he said subsequently appeared in Bayly's famous dispatch.

Until three o'clock in the afternoon, the fight raged fiercest around the town of Lule Burgas. With fearful loss, the Bulgarians carried the position at the bayonet's point. But, by then, so many Turkish batteries had concentrated their fire upon the town that only the western part of the place was tenable.

In the centre, the Bulgarians endeavoured to drive through the position between the First and Second Army Corps. It was here that the Turks held their own. Farther to the north, in the neighbourhood of Visa, the day went well for the Crescent; for Mahmoud Mukhtar not only repulsed the Bulgarian advance, but actually drove the enemy back through the thickly-wooded country to the south-east of Bunar Hissar.

They received this information from an orderly, who, riding south, was looking for Abdullah Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief. Bayly, who seemed to know everything, pointed out the direction in which the general was most

likely to be found. He conducted the orderly some little distance along the crest-line to a place whence the great crescent flag was visible upon a hilltop, above the village of Sakiskeui.

During the latter part of the afternoon, Philip and Steed Bayly walked toward the left flank of the Turkish position. Here they found that the town of Lule Burgas was still in possession of the Bulgarians. On questioning a wounded soldier, they learnt that throughout the afternoon the Bulgarians had made several futile attempts to advance; but the Turkish artillery fire was so heavy and well directed that the enemy could make no progress. The plain was littered with their dead.

About the time of their arrival at the headquarters of Abouk Pasha, the Commander of the Fourth Army Corps, an independent cavalry division was moved to the left, in support of the Turkish infantry defending the railway bridge. Steed Bayly descended the hill, in order to photograph the leading regiment.* He then returned to Philip, and together they witnessed the last phase of the first day of the battle.

This was a most heroic attempt on the part of the Turks to recapture the town. The lead-

* See illustration, facing page 222.

ing brigade swept down into the valley. Though they immediately came under a withering fire from the Bulgarian infantry in Lule Burgas and the shells from the batteries upon the hills to the west, nothing daunted, these invincible soldiers moved forward with determination and precision. For a moment it seemed as if the day was theirs. On the right of the line the Bulgarians were actually falling back, when the result of years of misrule and corruption deprived them of the victory that should have been theirs. One after the other, the batteries upon the hills south of Sakiskeui ran out of ammunition.

The Bulgarian gunners continued to ply the advancing infantry with shell. On the Turkish side the firing became desultory and half-hearted. And those soldiers, who themselves were starving, were left upon the stricken field unsupported by artillery and with no reserve ammunition for their rifles.

Yet there was no thought of retreat. The Turk was still the Turk of Plevna; he held manfully to his ground, until the shadow of darkness spread across the field, and gradually the roar of battle died down to a silence that was broken only by the groans and pitiful com-

plaints of the thousands of wounded who lay, lost and unattended, in the darkness of the valley.

It was not until night had fallen, and the intense excitement of the last eight hours a thing of the past, that Philip thought of his own personal comforts. He was hungry and exceedingly tired. He asked Bayly what he proposed to do.

"My child," said the war-correspondent, "fear not. I'm an old campaigner. First, I'm going to interview the Commander-in-Chief, to find out what he intends to do to-morrow. Then you and I will set out to find Esau. Esau—I must tell you—is my 'guide, philosopher, and friend'; incidentally, he is my groom, my cook, and dragoman. He is an Albanian; a hairy man. His real name is quite unpronounceable, but he answers all right to Esau. I cannot promise you a table d'hôte dinner, but Esau will have something for us to eat. You may be perfectly certain of that."

Thus running on in an incessant flood of talk, and leading his horse by the reins, Steed Bayly led the way to the village of Sakiskeui. There, leaving Philip outside the village, he had a long talk with Abdullah Pasha. When he returned,

he appeared considerably annoyed. Philip asked him what had happened.

"I have received a shock," said he, "of a severe nature, from which it will take time to recover. I told you I left my brother correspondents kicking their heels in Chorlu. Just now, when I marched into the house where Abdullah has billeted himself, the first person I set eyes upon was Mallory, of the *Morning Glory*. He did not seem particularly pleased to see me, and gave me the cheerful information that he has every reason to believe that Jackson of *The Delphian* is also somewhere on the field. You see," he added, "I was under the impression that I was the only correspondent on the spot."

Philip condoled with all the sympathy he could muster, though—to speak the truth—he cared very little about the rivalries of these newspapers.

"Still," said Bayly, brightening, "there is no reason to be down-hearted. I've learnt something from you about which they can know nothing. Moreover both these fellows have got motor-cars. This country is not suitable for a motor-car; the roads are far too bad. For myself, I would rather trust to a horse. I undertake to remain on the field until the battle

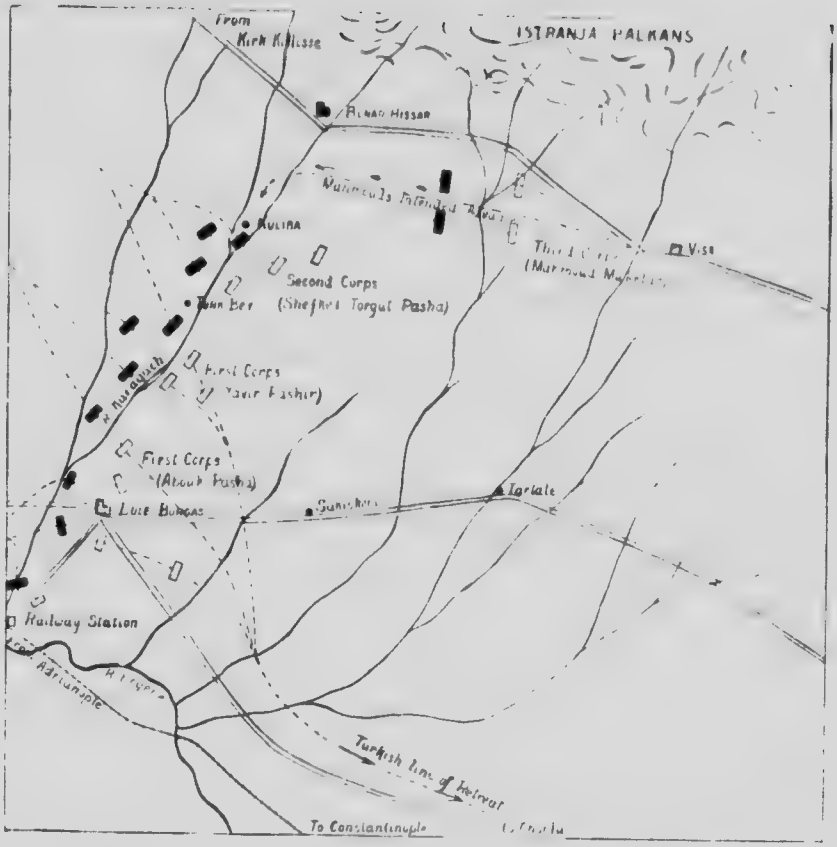
is lost and won, and yet reach Rodosto before either of them. But come, we must find Esau, and get some food and sleep. We will have to be up by sunrise to-morrow morning."

Steed Bayly was—as he had said—an old campaigner. He had taken possession of a small, empty house, some distance in rear of the Turkish position. This house lay well away from the main roads, and was hidden in a fold of the ground, so that there was small chance of it being discovered by fugitives from the front. Here, they found Bayly's servant, awaiting the return of his master. The man had spread the war-correspondent's blanket on the ground, and had also prepared a meal of chicken and rice. Esau explained the toughness of the chicken by saying that he had been obliged to chase it for nearly a mile.

Bayly generously shared his blankets with his new-found friend. But, before they turned in, he lit his pipe, and held forth in his inimitable manner upon the proceedings of the day.

"The Turks should have a chance," said he. "In fact, if they had any sort of organisation, they would sweep the field from end to end. The tactical advantage is theirs. On the left, as we saw, they might have retaken Lule

Burgas, had they not run out of ammunition. In the centre, the Second Army Corps still holds its own. The result of to-morrow's fighting depends much upon the success of Mahmoud Mukhtar on the right. You will notice, if you look at the map, that the Fourth, First, and Second Army Corps are in a straight line from the railway station towards Bunar Hissar. Mahmoud Mukhtar, in command of the Third Corps, on the right flank, is considerably to the rear. The Commander-in-Chief has received intelligence that the Third Corps is driving the Bulgarians back. Now, if, by midday to-morrow, Mahmoud can force his way to Bunar Hissar, he will be able to fall upon the flank of the Bulgarians opposing the Second Corps. In this part of the field the Bulgarians have all they can do to hold their own, and if Mahmoud descends upon their flank, they will be routed. Once they retire, the Second Corps will be able to advance, and storm Turk Bey from the north. And so on, along the whole line, until the Bulgarian army is put to flight. This, my lad, is what is called 'rolling up a position from a flank.' You may compare it to a row of ninepins, when by knocking over one at the end, you knock over the lot."



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF LULE BURGAS (OCT. 29,30)

From a plan by Steed Bayl.

"I see," said Philip; "it is very interesting, and very simple to understand."

"Precisely," said Bayly. "It all depends on Mahmoud Mukhtar with the Third Corps. He has got to knock over the first ninepin in the north. It would be madness to hope for any success from the south. The Bulgarian left flank rests upon the river and is quite secure."

"Then, you think," said Philip, "that the Turks will win?"

"I think nothing of the sort," said Bayly, polishing his eyeglass on the sleeve of his coat. "I said, that is what they might do, if they had any organisation or general staff worthy of the name. As it is, everything points to the fact that they will not be able to snatch the victory which lies within their grasp. I have five reasons for saying so. Firstly, every soldier I have spoken to has said he is starving. The majority have had no food for three days, and some for four; and no general can expect starving men to fight. If you remember, Marlborough gave his soldiers breakfast when the French were advancing at Blenheim. Secondly, the Turks ran out of ammunition to-day: they will do so again to-morrow. Thirdly, there are no hospitals or bearer companies on the field. The

moral effect of that is important: a man knows that, if he gets wounded, his wounds will not be attended to. Fourthly, there are no signallers, no telephones, no heliographs. Abdullah Pasha has not the least idea of what his Army Corps are doing. Finally, between ourselves, the Turks have not a general worth a brass farthing within a twenty mile radius of this spot."

So saying, Steed Bayly drew his blankets up to his chin—for the night was exceedingly cold—rolled over on his side, and, to the utter amazement of Philip, instantly fell fast asleep with his eyeglass in his eye.

It seemed to Philip that he had not been asleep for more than an hour, when he was rudely awakened by a kick. Sitting up, he beheld the war-correspondent, a towel in his hand, his coat off and his shirt sleeves rolled to the elbow.

"Get up!" said Bayly. "I give you ten minutes to wash in the puddle outside and have breakfast. Breakfast will consist of three sardines and a biscuit. I've nothing else."

Philip was not slow to obey. "What's the time?" he asked.

"Nearly eight o'clock. I rode over the hill at sunrise. There is a heavy mist in the valley,

otherwise the firing would have begun long ago."

As soon as Philip had finished his breakfast, he left the house, before the door of which he found "Esau," the Albanian groom, with two horses saddled and bridled.

"Now," said Steed Bayly, "I lend you this horse on one condition: that you don't leave my sight. I intend to go with you to Rodosto. We will be able to help one another. In a country like this it is a good thing to have a friend at hand. Will you give me your word of honour you will not desert?"

Philip with great reluctance said he would. Indeed, he was in no position to dictate; and a moment later, he and the war-correspondent walked their horses to the top of an adjacent hill.

Presently, the fog lifted, and the Bulgarian batteries along the whole line of their front opened a terrific fire upon the Turks. The patient soldiers of the Sultan were unable to reply. The majority of their batteries were without ammunition; and there is no greater test of the fortitude and tenacity of the soldier than to ask him to lie for hours under the enemy's fire without the power to retaliate.

The plan of the Turkish Commander-in-Chief was as Bayly had explained. He hoped to roll up the Bulgarian position from the north. The Third Army Corps, on the extreme right, had met with success during the operations on the previous day; the Second Army Corps, next in line, was more than holding its own. If these two forces could manage to join hands, the Bulgarians would be overthrown in the neighbourhood of Kuliba, and the victory would go to the Turks.

Walking their horses, Philip and Steed Bayly proceeded some distance to the north, where the war-correspondent selected a large saddle-backed hill as a convenient point from which to witness the battle. There, he had no sooner lifted his field-glasses to his eyes, than his experience told him that during the night General Savoff had taken steps to checkmate the Turkish plan. The Bulgarians had moved large reinforcements to the front of the Second Army Corps. It was doubtless their intention to drive in the Turks behind Karagach, before Mahmoud Mukhtar could work down from the north. In nearly all modern battles, it is simply a matter of time.

In this case, in order to gain time for the

Third Army Corps to arrive from Visa, Abdullah decided to attack with the Second Corps. The first intimation they had of this was the sight of several battalions of infantry and batteries of artillery massed under cover of the hills, awaiting the order to advance.

First, the batteries moved to the crest-line, and opened fire. Then, the order was given to the infantry to move forward in line. One regiment halted quite close to Philip and Steed Bayly: and the war-correspondent succeeded in taking a photograph of the battalion about to take open order and advance upon the enemy.* To Philip it seemed that there was something unutterably tragic in the fact that many of these men were marching to death in long, unwavering lines, with the Crescent banner in their midst, rising and falling in the wind.

The attack upon the Bulgarian centre at Lule Burgas was the most superb spectacle that Philip Thornton ever witnessed in his life. The Turkish infantry moved forward in long lines that extended in the valley as far as the eye could reach. They swept down upon the enemy like running waves upon a low-tide,

* See illustration, facing page 1.

sandy beach. The hills in front of them flashed fire from north to south. The whole valley was alive with shells. But they bore onward, undaunted and determined.

As yet, the Bulgarian rifle fire was desultory, and not general along the line. For a moment it seemed certain that the Turkish infantry would burst into the heart of the enemy's position. And then—so simultaneously that it looked as if it came from a single word of command — the whole Bulgarian frontage opened fire. A great, sullen roar arose that drowned even the thunder of the guns. It was the death-rattle of the Ottoman Empire.

The attack was swept from the field as chaff in a gale. Hundreds fell, never to rise again, before that withering blast of fire. And those who survived turned up their heels, and fled for their lives to the nearest place of safety.

It was now past midday: and though the firing had died down in this part of the field, the fight still raged fiercely around Lule Burgas and the railway line. In this direction, they could hear the din of battle and see the shells bursting in mid-air.

Steed Bayly told Philip to get mounted, and together they cantered southward across the

uplands. They passed Sakiskeui, where the flag of the Turkish Commander-in-Chief still flew upon the hillside; and a little farther on they came to a place whence they were able to look down upon the southern extremity of the battle.

Here, the men of the Fourth Army Corps were entrenched; and Steed Bayly, leaving Philip in charge of the horses, actually walked forward to the firing-line, to a place where good cover was afforded by a cluster of rocks and boulders, and photographed a party of Turkish soldiers, awaiting the Bulgarian advance behind an admirably constructed *sangar*. Whilst he was there, several shells struck the field-work, and hurled masses of stone into the air.* When he returned to Philip, he was grinning from ear to ear.

"I have only one film more,' said he. Then, changing his tone of voice, he dropped his eye-glass from his eye and threw out both his hands with a hopeless gesture. "What an age we live in!" he exclaimed. "To be frank with you, I fancy myself as a descriptive writer of no mean ability. And what am I forced to become? A snapshotting, itinerant photographer!

* See illustration, facing page 254.

Bah!" he cried in disgust. "I might as well waylay trippers on Brighton Beach—twopence a time, and all done while you wait."

There was no time just then to deplore the taste of the British public, for the Bulgarians, at about one o'clock in the afternoon, made an attack upon the left wing of the Turkish position. The Ottoman cavalry, thrown out to arrest the enemy's advance, were hurled back in disorder; and after an hour's desperate fighting, it became evident that but one hope remained, if the day was to be saved for Turkey. Though the Fourth, First, and Second Corps had been repulsed, Mahmoud Mukhtar was still forcing his way to the south, and there was still a chance that he would descend upon the left flank of the Bulgarians in time to turn the scale.

It was during the next hour, until three o'clock in the afternoon, that both sides made every effort, and called up every available man, to win the day. The artillery and musketry fire from either side exceeded anything that had gone before. The sound of that terrific conflict must have carried for miles upon the wind. On both sides, there was a rush towards the centre, where the key of the position had always lain. In view of this grand, final effort, there could be

no doubt that, had they been supplied with ammunition, both for their rifles and their guns, these patient and indomitable Turkish soldiers, starving though they were, would have borne the Crescent victorious beyond the hills held so fiercely by the enemy. As it was, whole regiments and batteries were helpless as huddled sheep; brigades of cavalry were wholly unable to move, because their horses were dying from want of food. Thus it was—and thus only—that the power of Turkey in Europe was crushed by the same mismanagement and incapacity to rule which had caused the Allies to rise in arms.

The closing episodes of the great battle were dramatic, swift, and decisive. The Bulgarians hurled their weight to the north, and Mahmoud's advance was checked. And then, Abdullah Pasha, recognising that a desperate step must be taken, again ordered the Second Corps to attack.

The men of the Second Corps were exhausted, starved, and with but little ammunition. Most of their officers were either killed or wounded. And yet, with magnificent tenacity and courage, they rose to their feet, and once again endeavoured to close with the foe. Amid

a cannonade that caused the earth to tremble, they were swept to Eternity, as the dark figures of the Bulgarian soldiers uprose upon the slopes of the western hills.

Steed Bayly, adjusting his eyeglass, turned to Philip.

"The Grand Ottoman Army is no more," said he. "Does it not strike you as unutterably tragic?"

Philip could not take his eyes from the valley, where the killed and wounded lay in heaps. "It is terrible!" said he.

"I have seen a good deal of war," said the correspondent; "but, I never saw a battle like this. It was like throwing millions of golden sovereigns into the sea, in mid-Atlantic. Do you understand what I mean?"

And Philip understood.

TURKISH CAVALRY MOVING INTO ACTION AT LULE BURGAS (*See page* 207)

Photo by Steed Bayly, Special War Correspondent of the "London Daily Gareth

CHAPTER XV

THE MAN WITH THE RED SCARF

DARKNESS was setting in with rapidity, when Steed Bayly and Philip rode southward along the Ottoman position. Everywhere was evidence of the crushing defeat which had been inflicted upon the Turks.

Hundreds of wounded, just able to drag themselves along, roamed the field, searching in vain for field hospitals and dressing stations. Several regiments of reservists had broken their ranks, and the fugitives were streaming to the east. Disabled guns had been abandoned. Here and there, wagons had been overturned, and left for the Bulgarians. Upon the road which led to Chorlu, a long column—wherein infantry, cavalry, artillery, and transport were intermingled in confusion—toiled towards the south. In a word, the Grand Army of Thrace had been routed. It was improbable the retreat would pause, until the fugitives had passed the famous lines of Chatalja, which guard the walls of Stamboul.

Philip asked the war-correspondent what he proposed to do.

Steed Bayly was essentially a man of action. He was specially gifted for the profession he followed, which requires the combined qualities of an enterprising journalist and an ardent soldier. He was able to make up his mind at once.

"It would be folly to endeavour to get to Rodosto to-night," said he. "We should be certain to lose our way, and might even fall into the hands of the Bulgarians."

"But, surely," urged Philip, "it would be dangerous to remain here?"

"Not a bit, my lad. The Bulgarians are probably just as exhausted as the Turks. They will not follow up the retreat till to-morrow morning. "We've got a long ride in front of us. We must eat and sleep, and rest our horses. I told Esau we should return to-night."

"I thought you had no more food," said Philip. "You told me that tin of sardines was the last of your provisions."

"So it was," said Bayly. "But I always carry an emergency ration. Here it is." He produced a long, narrow tin, upon which was a somewhat fantastic picture of a gentleman in khaki with a most expansive smile. "Cocoa

at one end, and soup at the other," said Bayly. "That will have to do for the three of us. Esau, I know, has one more feed for the horses."

It took them some time in the darkness to find the house where they had left the Albanian. The groom, who was waiting for them, had made a fire, though he had nothing to cook thereon. He said that he had searched the country for miles around, but the soldiers had looted everything.

Steed Bayly divided his emergency ration into three equal portions; and when Esau had eaten his share, he was told by his master to start for Chorlu at once on foot, and find his way back to Constantinople as best he could. The man, who seemed delighted to hear that he was to return to civilisation, and who feared that he stood in danger of falling into the hands of the Bulgarians, departed in the utmost haste. And soon afterwards, the two Englishmen lay down upon their blankets, and fell fast asleep.

They were awakened the following morning by the sound of musketry beyond the hills. In the utmost haste they ran into the dwelling-room where they had stabled their horses. They had brought the animals into the house for two reasons: firstly, the night was bitterly cold; and

secondly, they knew there was many a fugitive in the neighbourhood who would not scruple to steal a horse.

In a remarkably short time, the horses were saddled, and Philip was following the war-correspondent along a mule-track, at a steady trot. Bayly, consulting his map, decided to strike the main road, and follow this as far as Karishdiren. Thence he proposed to ride due south to Muradli, from which place a good road led direct to Rodosto. He calculated that they could reach Muradli before the advancing Bulgarian cavalry, even if the retreat was followed up without delay. Also, he was determined to reach the seaport before his rival correspondents, who, he knew, would be obliged to return to Chorlu.

It was still early morning when they came within sight of the main road; and there they beheld a sight so tragic and imposing that both drew rein and lifted their field-glasses to their eyes.

From east to west, across the wide, rolling downs, as far as they could see, the Grand Army of Thrace was in full retreat. As if spell-bound, they regarded this spectacle in silence. Steed Bayly was the first to speak.

"Do you know," said he, "I have always regretted one thing."

"What is that?" asked Philip.

"That I was not a war-correspondent in the time of the Napoleonic wars. I have often thought what copy I could have made of the retreat from Moscow. And there it is!" he exclaimed, with a motion of the hand. "There is the same thing, all over again—without the snow."

They rode forward and soon reached the road. For some miles they followed the retreat; and once, Bayly dismounted, and exposed his last film.*

Never had Philip Thornton a greater admiration for the Turkish soldier than then. These men were starving. This was the fourth day—and with some the fifth—that they had had no food. During that period they had lain in the midst of a storm of shot and shell. They had fought heroically; and at a time when the victory was well within their grasp, their supply of ammunition had failed. They had every reason to mutiny, to hate the men who commanded them, to complain against the government who had sacrificed the glory of their country and the

* See illustration, facing page 316.

lives of their friends upon the altar of Neglect. And yet, they marched with even ranks in sullen, gloomy silence. Clothed in rags, half frozen by the cold, stained with blood and dirt, the soldiers of the Sultan retired, even yet—unconquered.

As Philip and Bayly passed along the entire length of the column of the Second Army Corps, they heard not so much as a word of complaint, or a single voice raised in reproach; even the wounded in the jolting bullock-wagons were too proud to groan. If the Turks must retire from Europe, this may be their boast to the end of time: they brought back with them into Asia the same stubborn, indomitable spirit which in the Middle Ages carried the Ottoman arms to the very gates of Vienna.

At the little village of Karishdiren, Philip and Steed Bayly left the road and followed a bridle-track which led them eventually across the River Ergene. On the way, they passed many fugitives and refugees; and whenever they came to a hilltop, they were able to see hundreds of people—men, women, and children, some in bullock-wagons, a few mounted on horses and mules, but the great majority

on foot—streaming to the south and to the east.

Muradli was crowded with people. Wagons and horses' hoofs had so ploughed the streets that the mud was inches deep. They had no desire to halt at this place. Bayly was burning with impatience to get to their destination. As they rode forward, he gleaned a remarkable amount of information from Philip, concerning the retreat from Jenidze and the investment of Adrianople. When Philip had told the war-correspondent all he knew about the operations west of Lule Burgas, Bayly asked for details concerning this mysterious friend whose life was in danger at Rodosto.

At first, Philip hesitated to speak, and then was ashamed of his hesitation. There was no doubt that Steed Bayly could be trusted; moreover, it might so happen that the correspondent would offer his assistance. The last forty-eight hours had been so filled with excitement, and events of such magnitude and importance had taken place, that Philip had had little time to think of his own affairs. It now occurred to him that he was approaching Rodosto—alone. The four Bulgarians who had accompanied him at the start of his expedition

were either killed or wounded, and—unless he could rely upon Steed Bayly—there was no one to whom he could look for help. He already had a great admiration for the war-correspondent, who, indeed, was an exceptionally capable man.

As they left the bleak waste-lands behind them, and entered into the more picturesque and wooded country that fringes the Marmora Sea, Philip told his story from start to end, from the murder of his uncle to the moment when he had met Bayly on the field of battle. When he had finished, he looked at the war-correspondent, in expectation of words of sound advice.

Steed Bayly, at last, took his eyeglass from his eye, polished it, and put it back. This was a habit of his whenever he was engaged in thought.

"I'd like to see you through," said he: "but, I've got the *Gazette* to consider. They don't pay me to risk my life for anyone else but themselves; and to tell you the truth, it's against my principles to do so. When we get to Rodosto, I must take the first ship to Constantinople. Thence, I must go to Constanza, on the Roumanian coast, from which place,

being in neutral territory, I can send an uncensored telegram. I propose to write my dispatch on board, so that I can send it off immediately on my arrival. I must take the first ship at Rodosto. I wouldn't miss it for the world. So far, I'm well ahead of both Jackson and Mallory. With luck, I shall get my message into London a full day before anyone else. Still, I may have to wait; and if that is so, perhaps I shall be able to help you."

Philip expressed his thanks; whereupon his companion looked annoyed.

"Don't say a word," he almost snapped. "It's quite against my principles. I have never done anything like it in my life." Then he went on in an aggrieved tone, with frequent gesticulations of the hand. "Supposing," he complained, "supposing I get killed in this hare-brained escapade, what will be the result? My account of the Battle of Lule Burgas will never be written; Mallory and Jackson will roll home. I am beginning to wish I had never met you."

He then lapsed into silence, urging his horse forward with his spurs. The afternoon was now far advanced. They had ridden several miles, cantering the greater part of the journey,

and sometimes breaking into a gallop. For all that, there had been many miles when they had been forced to walk, owing to the sodden condition of the ground. Their horses were now spent. The hot breath pumped from their nostrils like steam, and their flanks were dripping wet. It soon became clear that it would be all the animals could do to reach the coast.

When, at last, they ascended a long hill, and looked down upon the clustered houses, the wharves and jetties, the mosques and open places of the seaport of Rodosto, Steed Bayly lifted his hat and raised a cheer. Then his field-glasses went to his eyes. For some minutes he examined every ship in the harbour. When he put the glasses back into their case, he was frowning hard.

"Just my luck!" he exclaimed. "There's no steamer in port, no smoke on the horizon." He turned suddenly in his saddle, and looked back upon the road.

"I've got the jumps," said he. "I keep on hearing the buzz of a motor-car. Every minute I expect to see Mallory or Jackson, or both of them, come flying past in their infernal musical-boxes."

Though Philip sympathised with Bayly in that no ship for Constantinople was in harbour, he was not hypocrite enough to pretend to be sorry. He knew that a tremendous enterprise was before him; and though he had a fair share of confidence in himself, Barco was an enemy not to be despised, and there was no man in the world he would rather have at his elbow than the special correspondent of the *London Daily Gazette*.

On arrival at the town, they put up their horses in the stables of a native *han*. Steed Bayly immediately set out to make inquiries as to when the boat from Constantinople was expected. As for Philip, he went straight to the quay; and there, sure enough, at the end of the jetty furthest to the east, a man was seated cross-legged by the side of a basket of melons, with a red scarf around his waist.

Philip looked at this man for no longer than an instant, and then walked quickly away. He was sure he had not been seen. He returned to the *han*, and lying down upon a divan, asked the proprietor to bring him food. The proprietor informed him that the Austrian packet for Constantinople was not expected at Rodosto until the following afternoon.

Philip finished his meal, and smoked a cigarette. Outside, it was quite dark. There was a noise of many voices in the streets, which were thronged with refugees. As yet, no one had heard of the defeat at Lule Burgas. Two hours passed; and still, Steed Bayly did not return.

At last, the door was flung back so violently as to tear one of the hinges from the woodwork; and Bayly flung into the room. He could not keep still. He paced to and fro. Both his fists were clenched, and his eyeglass was continually falling from his eye.

"I must wait till to-morrow morning," he cried, "till daybreak! Think of that! And every minute is bringing one, or both, of those motor-cars nearer and nearer. My lad, if I live through this, and get back to England, I'll settle down in the country, and—and grow potatoes," he ended in impotence.

"If the packet is not expected until the afternoon," said Philip, "how can you hope to get away by daylight?"

"I found an Englishman," said Bayly, "an old sailor—one of those nc'er-do-wells that drift about the world, in anybody's or nobody's pay. This fellow knew where I could get a tug. He

has undertaken to see me through. I have promised to pay him a hundred pounds for it. I rely wholly upon him."

"Then, why can't you start at once?"

"Because the tug has no coal on board, you idiot!" cried Bayly, lifting his voice to a shout, and so agitated that his eyeglass was going backwards and forwards from his waist to his eye, and from his eye to his waist, like ether in a tube. "What's the good of a tug without coal? What's the use of an engine without steam? What's the use of a war-correspondent, anyhow?" He never waited for an answer. "No use!" he cried. "Useless! Rotten!"

Philip was about to speak, when Bayly took the words from his mouth.

"Come," he cried, "let's get at this job of yours. If I don't do something, I'll go mad. I'm ready for anything you like."

It was Philip who now took charge of the situation. He was perfectly self-possessed, whereas the other was so excited he could not stand still.

"Have you your revolver?" he asked. "Loaded?"

Bayly nodded his head.

"Then, listen to my instructions," said Philip

"It would not do for me to be seen: I might be recognised. It is understood an Englishman is coming to Rodosto, to pay the ransom. Here is the money: five hundred pounds in Bank of England notes. You needn't count them: they are all right. You must pretend that you are that Englishman. You will go to the man I shall point out to you, and say that you have come to pay the money. He will lead you away to the place where Petroff is imprisoned. I will follow. I am well enough disguised not to attract attention; and besides, no one in this place knows me. After that, we must trust to Providence, and our revolvers. Don't hesitate to fire. We have gipsies to reckon with, and, as you know, they are treacherous and cowards."

By this time, Steed Bayly had regained much of his normal presence of mind.

"Go ahead," said he. "I must do something—though my principles are strictly against this sort of thing."

They passed through the narrow streets. Many people were still abroad, despite the lateness of the hour. For the most part, these were peasant fugitives who had fled to the coast in hope of being able to cross into Asia. They

were destitute and homeless; the majority of them had had no food for days. It was pitiful to pass women seated upon doorsteps with small babies crying in their arms, or a crowd of ragged refugees, huddled around a fire, endeavouring to keep themselves warm in the bitter cold of night.

When they came to the eastern pier, there was a man with a red scarf, seated cross-legged, by the side of a basket of melons. It was not the same man that Philip had seen late in the afternoon. Probably, there were two or three who took turn and turn about, in order that, day and night, someone might be on watch; so eager were the gipsies to obtain the ransom. Philip pointed out the man to Bayly, and then dropped back into the shade, remaining near enough to overhear the brief conversation that followed.

"I am an Englishman," said the war-correspondent.

The man made a motion of the head, but gave no answer.

"I have here," Bayly went on, "five hundred pounds, in English money."

The man instantly rose to his feet. "Follow me," said he, in broken English, and set off at a

brisk walk into the town. Steed Bayly followed; and, some little distance behind, came Philip, grasping the handle of his loaded revolver.

One behind the other, they picked their way through dark and narrow streets, across little squares and courtyards, where they were obliged to step over the forms of several people who were sleeping on the ground. At last, towards the eastern extremity of the town, where the houses thinned upon the shoulder of the bay, the man with the red scarf stopped, and knocked three times upon the door of a small and very dilapidated house, situated in a cyprus grove. By now, the moon had arisen. The roof of the house was half hidden by the branches of the trees.

As the man received no answer, he knocked again; and presently a light appeared in a window, so small that it consisted of only a single pane of glass.

A moment later, a wicket was opened in the door, and a voice from within spoke in the strange Chingeni language.

The man with the red scarf answered. Then several bolts were drawn back; and at last, the door was opened. A figure stood in the illumined doorway, beckoning to Steed Bayly to

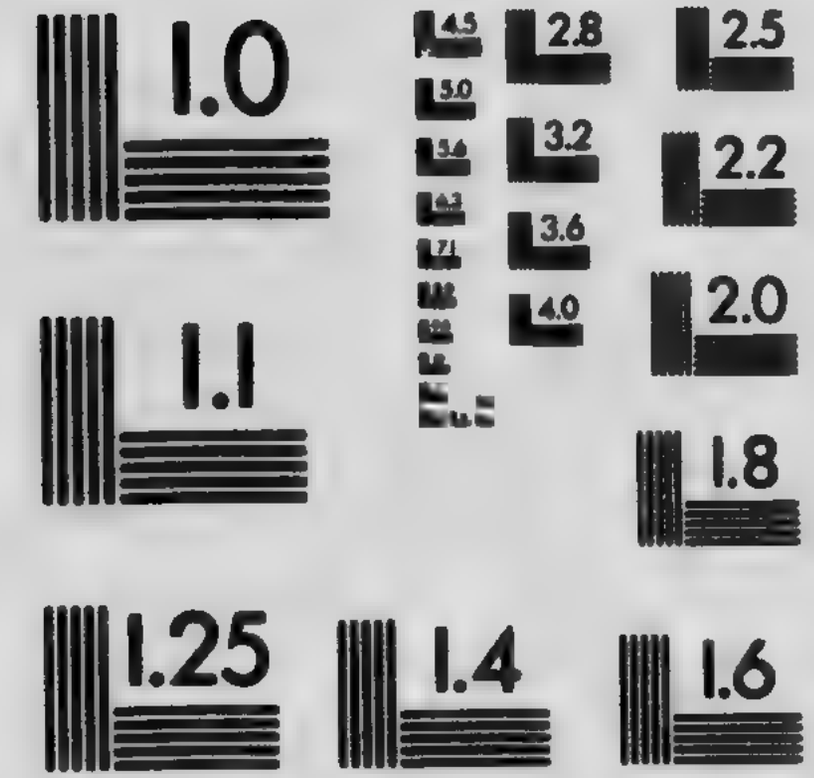
enter; and Philip recognised the gipsy hammal, Barco.

The war-correspondent drew himself up to his full height, thrust both his hands into his pockets—in one of which, no doubt, he carried his revolver—and walked boldly into the house. Immediately, the door was shut.

Philip waited for what seemed to him an interminable time. He crept stealthily to the window, and looked in, but the room was empty. He then went to the door, and placing his ear to the woodwork, listened. At that moment, from somewhere within the house, a shot rang out, followed by a loud, piercing cry.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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CHAPTER XVI

A RACE FOR THE CABLE

In frantic haste, Philip seized the handle to open the door. But, try as he might, he could not do so; it had been bolted from the other side.

For a moment, he stood irresolute. The shot had evidently been fired by Steed Bayly, who, doubtless, stood in need of help. It was improbable that Barco and his confederates were armed.

Philip drew back, and then with all his force hurled his weight against the door. Time and again he tried to burst it open, until his shoulder was bruised and the perspiration stood in beads upon his forehead. Then, finding it impossible to force an entrance here, he ran in all haste to the window and looked in.

There was no light in the room itself; but an inner door was opened, and beyond, a lamp stood upon a table. There was no furniture in the room, which, however, was no longer empty: the figure of a man lay full length upon the floor.

This man was dressed as a Turk of the poorer class. From his attitude it appeared he had been hurled into the room, in a semi-conscious, or quite unconscious, state, and now lay as he had fallen, with one leg crossed above the other and his head turned sideways. As Philip's eyes became accustomed to the light, he observed that the man's hands were bound behind his back.

As he looked, the prostrate figure moved, rolled over with difficulty, and finally sat up. One glance was enough for Philip. Seizing his revolver by the barrel, he drove in the pane of glass.

"Boris!" he cried. "Boris!"

Boris Petroff looked about him in a dazed and senseless manner, unable to realise whence the sound of his own name had come, and not recognising the voice of his English friend.

Philip cried out again, louder than ever, this time saying who he was.

At that, Boris looked up, and saw Philip's face at the window. Immediately, he got to his feet, and stood swaying in the centre of the room.

"Come here!" cried Philip, in a kind of breathless whisper. "Be quick!"

"How did you find me?" asked the Bulgarian. "I never thought to see you again."

The situation was exasperating. They were within a few inches of one another; they could speak in whispers; and yet, by reason of the smallness of the window, one could not get in, and the other could not get out.

"There's no time to answer questions now," said Philip, speaking quickly. "Come as close to the window as you can. I have a knife. I believe, I can reach down and cut the rope, and set free your hands."

Boris obeyed; and a moment later, his arms were free.

"Now," said Philip, "how can I get in?"

"There is only one door," said Boris, "and that is bolted. All the windows are small, like this."

"Can you get to the door, to open it?"

"If you lend me your revolver, perhaps I can. There are six men—all gipsies—in the next room, through which I shall have to pass. They are the same villains that found me in the well, by Haji Bagdadi's café, on the night I fled from the police. They took me for you; and until to-day, I have been quite unable to convince them that I am not an Englishman.

Just now, a man was brought into the house whom I had never seen before. I was asleep at the time; but, they woke me up. This man said he had come to pay the ransom, to set me free. He produced the money, in Bank of England notes, which were counted out upon the table. It was then that an unfortunate thing happened: one of the gipsies caught sight of a money-belt this Englishman was wearing. These scoundrels will do anything for money. Besides, at a time like this, when the whole place is in an uproar, they have little or nothing to fear from the police. The long, thin man, with a broken nose, whom we hunted that night in Adrianople, struck at him with a knife; but, the Englishman was as quick as lightning. In two strides he got his back to the wall, and when the thin man came towards him again, he whipped out his revolver, and shot him dead."

"What then?" asked Philip.

"I saw the Englishman standing at bay in a corner of the room, with his revolver in his hand, and his eyeglass in his eye. The gipsies were round him in a ring, armed with their knives, not daring to approach. I did all I could to help, but my hands were bound. I jumped to my feet, and ran into the midst of

them like a madman. I received a blow on the head that stunned me; and I suppose they threw me into this room to get me out of the way."

"Where are they?" asked Philip.

"In there," said Boris, pointing in the direction of the open door through which came the light of the lamp.

"Take this," said Philip, handing his loaded revolver through the window. "Fire into their backs."

Philip drew away from the window, and waited in suspense. It was a moment of supreme anxiety. He looked up in the sky, and watched a full moon above the tree-tops, threading itself like the point of a needle through streaky, frosty clouds. And then, three shots in quick succession sounded within the house.

They were followed by the noise of rushing feet, by the thud of a table overturned and the crash of a broken lamp. There were loud shouts and oaths in the gipsy language. And then, two more shots, and another shriek, louder than the first.

Then, one after the other, in violent haste the bolts in the door were shot back, and four men rushed into the night like a covey of startled birds.

Philip ran forward to meet them, resolved to use his fists. By the light of the moon he recognised the face of Barco, upon which just then fear had stamped its mark. He struck out, and missed. There was the flash of a knife, followed by a laugh; and the man was gone into the darkness.

Philip stopped dead, and for some moments remained indecisive. At first he did not realise what it was that had brought him to a standstill; nor did he think what he was doing when he lifted his hand to his neck. On the instant, he was made aware of the truth. He looked at his hand in the moonlight. It was stained dark by something that was wet. Barco's long knife had driven through the muscles under his ear; and though he did not know it then, the wound had missed the artery by the fraction of an inch.

Philip was not conscious of pain. In moments of great excitement, the nerves are unable to convey the sensation of pain to the mind; we suffer without knowing it, which is the same thing as not suffering at all. He knew that he was wounded, for he could feel the warm blood flowing over his shoulder. Otherwise he experienced no sort of inconvenience.

Pulling himself together, he walked briskly

to the doorway, and entered the house. As he did so, he noticed, for the first time, that a great tongue of flame and clouds of rolling smoke were issuing from the chimney.

One step beyond the threshold was enough to tell him that the house had been set on fire. He was immediately conscious of a sense of heat which was not altogether unwelcome, for the night was cold. He passed from the first room into one beyond, where the light was dazzling by reason of the flames that licked the walls. The place was rapidly filling with smoke.

Close to the door, Boris Petroff was bending over the forms of two men who lay like sacks upon the ground, one upon his back, the other prone. Near at hand was Steed Bayly, special war-correspondent of the *Daily Gazette*, as immaculate as ever, with his white hunting-stock and gold safety-pin, and his eyeglass in his eye.

"That was a tight corner!" said he. "I was beginning to wonder how I was going to get out of it."

Boris rose to his feet.

"Both these men are dead," said he.

Philip looked down into the face of the man who lay upon his back, and recognised the grim, distorted features of him who had betrayed him

—the man who, having taken his bribe in Adrianople, had disclosed his whereabouts to Barco.

"That one," said Bayly, pointing to this man, "was mine. You shot the other," he added, turning to the Bulgarian.

"It's time we got out of this," said Boris. And indeed the ceiling was already on fire and the heat almost unbearable.

"One moment," said Bayly; "I have no intention of leaving five hundred pounds to burn."

So saying, he went down upon his knees, and searched in the pockets of the dead man's coat. He soon found the bank notes that he had paid over as ransom. The man had thrust them into a dirty paper bag.

After that, all three left the house. They stood for some minutes outside, watching the wild flames leaping amid the branches of the trees, which caught fire in the heat. A soft wind that was blowing seaward filled the night with sparks.

"How did it happen?" asked Philip. Whereat, the war-correspondent burst into laughter.

"You should have seen them!" he cried. "Your friend came upon them from behind.

It was a flank attack, admirably conducted, delivered in the nick of time. He sent three bullets into the ceiling. He was frightened to fire low for fear of hitting me. They literally tumbled over one another in their anxiety to get out. They knocked over the table and the lamp, which—before we knew it—had set fire to the house. Before they got to the door, your friend gave them two more, and brought down one. It was the smartest piece of work I ever saw."

"And you are not hurt?" asked Philip.

"Not a scratch."

"And you, Boris? What has happened to you since we parted in the Café of the Five Nations, in Adrianople?"

"I can tell my story in a few words," said the Bulgarian. "Five minutes after you had hidden me in the well, three men dropped down upon me from above, like cats. Before I had time to draw my revolver, I was seized, gagged, and bound. I struggled; but it was no use. The odds were three to one. When I came to my senses, I was in a bullock-wagon, jolting along a road. I was brought into Rodosto by night. I assured them, time and again, that I was not an Englishman; that it would be useless

for them to apply to England for a ransom. They would not believe me. They knew that you were in Adrianople, disguised as a Turk. I remember you told me your uncle had noticed a physical resemblance between us; we are about the same height and build. It was not until this morning that the man with the broken nose arrived from Adrianople. He was quite unable to say who I was, but he remembered he had seen me before, and in your company, on the night we ran him down. They were deliberating what was best to do with me, when this gentleman appeared upon the scene, and offered to pay the ransom. The rest of the story you know."

"It appears," said Philip, "we arrived at the eleventh hour."

"You did," said Boris. "And in any case, it is already past twelve o'clock, and to-day is November the first—the day on which, if the ransom was not forthcoming, they intended to put me to death."

"I am afraid," said Philip, "I am the only one who has made a fool of himself. I lent my revolver to you, Boris. I was unwise enough to go for them with bare fists as they came out of the door."

It was some time since Philip had spoken at any length; and it was now that Boris Petroff and the war-correspondent noticed that his voice was weak and faint.

"What's this?" cried Boris, in alarm. "Why, my poor friend, you're hurt! Your coat is saturated in blood!"

"Yes," said Philip. "Barco stabbed me in the neck."

Bayly took one arm, and Boris Petroff the other, and together they assisted Philip to walk into the town. They stopped outside the first house to which they came in which there was a light, and knocked upon the door. Immediately, it was opened by an old woman, an Armenian, to whom they explained that they had with them a wounded man who stood in need of attendance.

At her suggestion, they took Philip to a room at the top of the house, where she supplied them with water, bandages, and even disinfectants which she had procured that very day, for fear of the cholera which was already ravaging the troops.

In the matter of giving first aid to the wounded, Steed Bayly proved himself an expert. Indeed, there were few things that this inde-

fatigable gentleman seemed unable to do. He washed the wound with the greatest care, in water reeking of carbolic. Then, he bound up Philip's neck and shoulder with bandages and cotton lint. Finally, he produced his flask, and gave the patient a sip of brandy.

By then, Philip, who felt completely recovered, was protesting that all this trouble was nonsense. He said that he still felt a little weak from loss of blood, but that he was quite able to walk back to the *han* where he had left his horse.

In this room was a flight of steps that led out upon the flat roof of the house. Thither Boris had already ascended; and the young Bulgarian, who had spent several days shut up in a little room in semi-darkness, now called to Steed Bayly to come up and see the sunrise. The war-correspondent, adjusting his eyeglass, ascended the steps, followed by Philip Thornton.

The sight which met their eyes was typical of the East. Geographically, they were in Europe; but both shores of the Marmora Sea belong to the world of Asia. Below them, in the grey light of dawn, was one of the cities of the ancient world, whence came enlightenment to Greece. The house was situated on a hilltop, north of the town. Immediately

before them, the white, square-cut houses, mingled with the cyprus groves, fell, tier below tier, to the margin of the sea, whereon the sails of dozens of native craft showed white upon the calm, dark blue surface. Behind them were the black, tree-covered hills, ending in the two promontories that enclosed Rodosto Bay, upon one of which there was a lighthouse, conical and white. To the east, beyond the hills to the north of Eregli, the sun was rising in a blaze of gold. Westward, the white road that led to the north rose, step by step, to the table-land of Thrace.

As these three adventurers stood upon the house-top, regarding the beauty of the scene, there came to their ears a faint purring sound, like the droning of some enormous insect. This grew louder and louder as they listened. Once, it was broken by a jerk, and then continued still louder, but slower than before.

Steed Bayly's lips were parted; his eyes were fixed upon the white road to the west. For fully a minute he neither moved nor spoke. Then, suddenly, there appeared amid the hills a motor-car, not five hundred paces distant.

For a moment, the car seemed to hang upon the crest-line. Then the driver changed gear, and it came down towards Rodosto with a rush.

"Jackson!" cried Bayly. "That's *The Delphian* car!"

Steed Bayly went down the steps, three at a time. When he reached the front door, he flung it open, and slammed it so violently as to shake the house from its very foundations to the roof. Then, he raced through the streets like a maniac. He was so excited that he flung his arms about him as he ran. Philip and Boris Petroff followed at his heels as quickly as they could.

Once, in the centre of the town, Bayly, turning a corner quickly, came full tilt into a hammal, whom he knocked head over heels. At another time, his course was impeded by a man carrying upon his back an enormous bundle of oats. The man flew in one direction, and the bundle of oats in another; and the war-correspondent passed between them, his eyeglass still in his eye.

He made straight for the quay. He ran so fast they found it no easy matter to keep up with him. When they came upon him again, he was on one of the jetties, in imminent danger of falling into the water, struggling on the very brink, with a great, bull-necked Englishman, who was obviously a sailor.

"Why haven't you coaled?" he was roaring.

"What did you promise me, you scoundrel? Why aren't we under way?"

The man tried in vain to answer. Though he appeared to be a man of herculean strength, the war-correspondent was shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"I tell you, I've not a moment to lose!" cried Bayly. "If we are not clear of this jetty in five minutes, I swear to you, I'll shoot you dead—stone dead—dead as pork. When will you be ready to start?"

He then let go his victim's throat; and the man answered in a voice that was peculiarly squeaky and high-pitched for one who was so large and deep of chest.

"I'm ready now," said he.

"Then, why didn't you say so?" roared the war-correspondent.

"Because," answered the sailor with perfect truth, "because you never gave me a chance."

"Jump in!" cried Bayly. "Jump in, and let her go!"

Both together sprang down into the tug, which rolled at her moorings on the swell. With quick hands the three Greeks who formed the crew set free the hawsers from the bollards. The engines began to throb, and the screw

TURKS ENTRENCHED AT LULE BURGAS (*See page 210*)

Photo by Steed Bayly, Special War Correspondent of the "London Daily Graphic"

to churn the water; and a moment later, the tug was under way.

At that moment, another Englishman dashed down the jetty. He was a little man who wore riding-boots which were splashed with mud. In his haste, his hat had blown off, and the sun shone upon a head that was absolutely bald. Philip recognised him at once. It was Horace Jackson, the famous war-correspondent of *The Delphian*, the author of *To Pekin from the Taku Forts* and *The Great White Man's War*.

At that moment, Steed Bayly was not visible. His figure was screened by the steps of the gangway that led to the bridge. Jackson lifted his hands to his mouth, and shouted to the skipper of the tug.

"A hundred pounds," he cried, "for that tug—money down!"

Whereupon, Steed Bayly appeared upon the bridge, and in his inimitable manner kissed his hand to his rival and his friend.

"Au revoir, old man," he cried. "I am taking a short sea voyage for the benefit of my health."

Horace Jackson turned away in disgust. He was literally foaming at the mouth.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BELEAGUERED CITY

THROUGHOUT the whole of that mornin Horace Jackson, the distinguished cor spondent of *The Delphian*, one of the m influential papers in the world, was searchi Rodosto harbour from east to west in endeavour to find some kind of steamship any kind, in fact, that could boast of a padd box or a screw—to take him to Constantinop His efforts were entirely unsuccessful. He not get away until late in the afternoon, wh the Austrian packet arrived from the Dar nelles. By then, Steed Bayly had left C stantinople, and was on his way to Roumanian port to cable his famous dispatch

Two days later, Europe stood amazed at resources of modern journalism. The *Da Gazette* published an account of the Battle Lule Burgas which extended over two and quarter pages; whereas the readers of oth newspapers, such as *The Delphian* and *Morning Glory*, had to satisfy themselves w

a brief, censored paragraph, setting forth the indisputable fact that the Turkish army was in full retreat upon the famous lines of Chatalja. How Steed Bayly was rewarded by the proprietors of his paper, and how henceforward he was looked upon as the most capable and brilliant man in his profession, are facts which lie beyond the margin of this tale. He drops out of our story as he came into it: on a sudden, and with his eyeglass in his eye.

As for his rivals, no sooner had Jackson left Rodosto on the Austrian steam-packet, than Mallory, of the *Morning Glory*, in a sixty horse-power Panhard, came flying into the town. When he heard that both *The Delphian* and the *Daily Gazette* were before him, he tore his hair out by the roots, and stamped and fumed. He tried to buy up every ship in the harbour; and finally, setting sail in a small fishing craft, he had the misfortune to fall in with a storm that very night. The skipper was obliged to put in to Silivri, where they arrived with a sail ripped by the wind to shreds. Thence, Mallory took horse, purchasing the only animal to be procured in the town, at a most fictitious price. On the back of this poor brute, he galloped towards Stamboul, until the

horse fell dead within sight of the towers
St. Sophia. Covered from head to foot in mu
panting and out of breath, with his clothes to
to tatters, he scrambled on board the Constan
boat as the anchor was being weighed; a
there, to his amazement, found himself face
face with Jackson.

But these things have little to do with o
story, beyond the fact that Steed Bayly render
material help to Philip, with whose adventu
we are mainly concerned. For all that, it
well to consider the hardships that must
undergone, the dangers that must often be ru
and the breathless excitement of the inevitab
race for the cable's end, in order that we m
read in comfort at our breakfast tables a glo
ing account of a battle fought only a few da
before, on the other side of the world.

That night Philip and Boris Petroff remain
in the Turkish *han* where Philip had stabl
his horse. By lamplight, in the small hours
the morning, Philip told his story; and then t
sealed orders were opened.

These were brief and to the point, as milita
orders should be. The four Macedonian soldi
were to return at once to the Bulgarian arm
finding their way back as best they could. (

course the writer could not have known that these men were destined to be struck down upon the field of Lule Burgas, before they were three miles from camp.) As soon as the escort had departed, Boris and his English friend were to take steps to change their disguises. It was suggested that they should pass themselves off as the two sons of a well-to-do Turkish merchant of Salonica. As we know, there was a strong resemblance between them, and they might easily pass as brothers. They were to proceed to Adrianople and report themselves to General Ivanoff, commanding the investing forces, who had been apprised of their coming. The general would give them the benefit of any information he possessed, and would do his utmost to assist them to enter the town. If they succeeded in passing the Turkish outposts and gaining the city, they were to go at once to the Café of the Five Nations, and obtain the dispatches which Philip Thornton had hidden. Having gained possession of these, they were to return and deliver the dispatches into the hands of the general. If the enterprise succeeded, Boris was promised speedy promotion.

The young Bulgarian was all eagerness to start. However, in any case, he would not have

been able to do so for some days; for his frie
was seized by a fever. For three nights Phi
lay tossing on a divan in the *han*, with a thi
that scorched his throat, a tongue that clave
the roof of his mouth, and a skin that was
and burning. This fever had, no doubt, b
brought on by loss of blood and subsequ
exertion. Boris Petroff obtained the services
a Greek doctor who had studied medicine
Heidelberg; and in a week's time, following
doctor's directions, the young Englishman
completely restored to health.

By then, the town of Rodosto had fallen i
the hands of the victorious Bulgarian arm
Practically no effort was made to defend
position which, properly manned and entrench
could have held in check for some days
advance of Savoff's main army.

Boris reported himself to the general in co
mand, proving his identity by the orders he
received from the Chief of Staff. He explai
that it was impossible for him to start
Adrianople, until his English friend was su
ciently recovered to withstand the rigours of
journey. He was forced by circumstance
rely wholly upon Philip.

At last, when the two friends were about

set forth upon their journey, news was received that an armistice had been declared before the lines of Chatalja. The Bulgarian army, advancing upon the capital, had been brought to a standstill before the famous line of forts which extends across the narrowest part of the peninsula, about twenty miles from Constantinople. After some delay, it was decided that hostilities should cease, whilst a Peace Conference was held in London. None the less, the investment of the three beleaguered fortresses—Adrianople, Scutari and Yanina—was to continue, and no food supplies were to be allowed to pass into the stricken towns. Both Philip and Boris were sent for by the general in command at Rodosto.

He told them he had received a letter by a dispatch-rider, who had come in from Adrianople late in the previous evening, saying that, by the terms of the armistice, a spy could not attempt to enter the fortress whilst the peace negotiations were in progress. So much depended upon gaining possession of the hidden dispatches that General Ivanoff suggested that Petroff should report himself at head-quarters directly hostilities were continued. Boris had made known the contents of his dispatches, which contained

invaluable information in regard to Yildiz, To
Yolu, and other forts on the eastern side of th
town. The general felt that he would not b
justified in ordering a general assault upon th
Turkish position until he was in possession
information of such vast importance as the co
tents of Petroff's dispatches, which, with litt
stretch of the imagination, might be called th
keys of Adrianople.

It was not until the first week of Februa
that the two friends received orders to betak
themselves to the beleaguered city. They a
companied an empty convoy which was to pr
ceed from Rodosto to Mustafa Pasha, passi
Adrianople. Hostilities had not yet bee
resumed; the Peace Conference was still sitting
but it seemed more and more improbable th
the diplomats would arrive at a mutual agre
ment, and both sides were anxious to continu
the war.

The tableland of Thrace was bitterly cold
icy winds blew from the steppes of Russia, an
the country-side was buried in snow. Upo
an endless expanse of whiteness, the main roa
traversed by the wheels of baggage-trains, co
voys and ammunition-columns, and trampled b
the feet of armies, lay like the twisted for

RANCE

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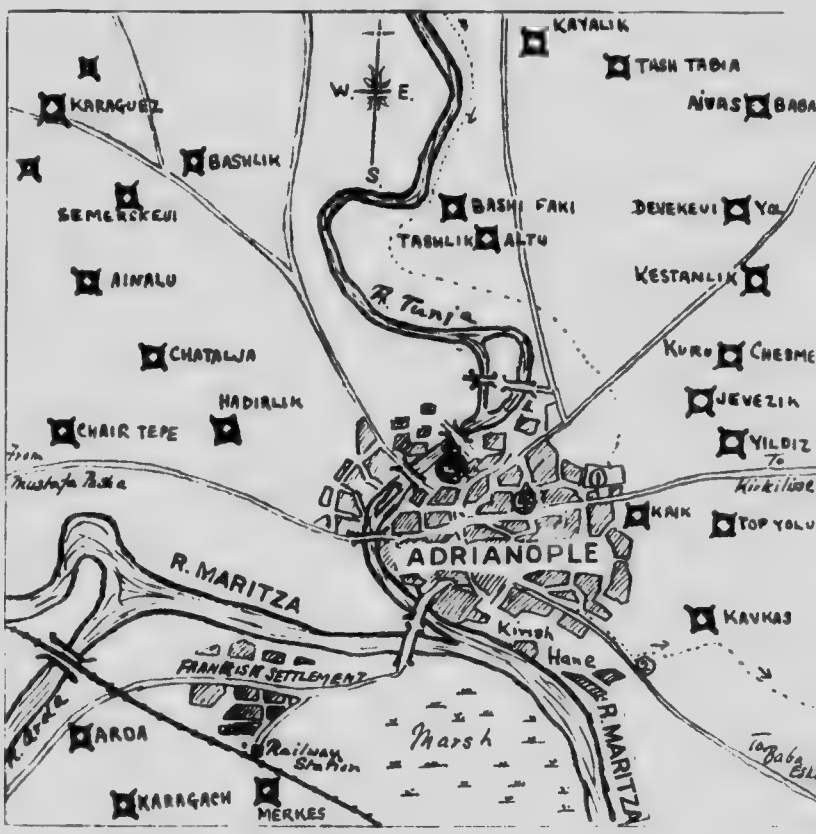

THE DEFENCES OF ADRIANOPLE

... *Route followed by Boris Petroff and Philip Thornton*

1. HOUSE AND GARDEN
2. EXAMINING POST
3. HOUSE OF ARMENIAN WOMAN
4. SULTAN SELIM MOSQUE

of some enormous serpent, extending from horizon to horizon, across the face of that bleak, inhospitable country. The valley of the Karagach, where during the last three days of October the greatest conflict of modern times had raged, was desolate and still. The field of Lule Burgas was as silent as the grave. The snow was spread like a pall upon the ground where so many thousands of gallant soldiers had sacrificed their lives.

In all, it took them fourteen days to reach Adrianople; and immediately on their arrival, they were sent for by the general, who received them with the greatest courtesy. That night they dined with General Ivanoff and his staff, in the house where he had taken up his quarters. A great wood fire was burning in the grate; and it was, indeed, a luxury to sit at a table once again, to eat the best of food, and to drink the excellent wine which comes from Roumania.

After dinner, the general took Boris and his chief staff-officer into his office, a small room on the other side of the house, whilst Philip remained in the dining-room to be entertained by the junior members of the staff.

During that interview, Boris was shown the maps and plans of the city in possession of the

general. The young lieutenant was able to give a detailed account of the contents of his dispatches, but he could not quote from memory the various notes he had taken. In obedience to the orders he had received on leaving Sofia, he had confined the greater part of his energies to the forts on the eastern side of the town. As far as these were concerned, he promised the general that his dispatches would be found to contain the most important information; he had noted the number, positions, and nature of the guns; he had explored the field of fire of each fort, and had made a note of suitable landmarks to denote the most advantageous lines of attack; he had also discovered the strength of the various garrisons, and the capabilities of the commanders: and he had noted the various kinds of obstacles—such as barbed wire entanglements and abattis—by means of which the Turks had strengthened their position.

On asking the general whether he had done right to hide his dispatches, Boris incurred a violent slap on the back. The general burst into laughter.

"As things have turned out," said he, "you appear to have done wrong. However, you could not foresee that you would be mistaken

for someone else, and held as hostage by a pack of gipsies. The chances were that—if you were captured at all—you would be captured by the Turks. It would certainly have been a great misfortune if these dispatches had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The garrison would have been put upon their guard. As it is, there is a chance of getting them back. To-morrow, I am going to send you across the Tunja. You will spend a day in a village on the northern side of the town. At ten o'clock at night, you will set out with your friend, pass the forts, and endeavour to get into the town. I must warn you we have already discovered that the Turkish sentries are particularly alert. How you are to succeed, I cannot tell you. You must trust to your own common sense and courage—and also, to luck. You must not start before ten o'clock. By then, the majority of the people in the city will be asleep. If you manage to secure your dispatches, you will do your utmost to get back here with as little delay as possible. I shall not expect you till I see you, and I hope to see you soon. Much depends upon your efforts." The general held out his hand, and Boris took it.

The following afternoon, a staff-officer con-

ducted Boris and Philip Thornton to the villag
where they were to hide throughout the earlie
part of the night. All three were mounted
and wrapped about in heavy fur coats, unde
which the two friends wore . costume whic
is, perhaps, the most peaceable, conventiona
and matter of fact, in the world.

They were to pass themselves off as tw
Turks of the merchant class. They wor
starched collars—a trifle too high for comfor
—grey trousers, and frock-coats. Were it no
for the fez that each was to wear upon his hea
they would have resembled a pair of Londo
shop assistants, or stockbrokers' clerks.

And yet, they were about to set forth upo
the most dangerous enterprise it is possible t
undertake. It is one thing to enter into battl
shoulder to shoulder with one's comrades, an
proud of the uniform one wears; it is anothe
to creep by dead of night, disguised as one
the enemy, into the very jaws of death. I
war—and modern war especially—good inform
tion in regard to the dispositions and intentio
of the enemy is one of the secrets of succes
In order to gain information, the employmen
of spies is a necessity. If scant mercy is show
to the spy who has the misfortune to be caug

red-handed at his work, it is because the trade of espionage is not to be encouraged. Though the word has dishonourable connections, there is nothing disgraceful in the calling of a naval or military spy. On the contrary, it is a business that requires nerves of steel, inordinate courage and powers of resource, and a total contempt for death.

As he waited in that deserted house in the valley of the Tunja, Philip realised to the full the perilous nature of his mission. He tried to explain how it was that he found himself mixed up with the affairs first of one army, and then of the other. He could not understand why he—an Englishman—who had originally set out with the object of avenging his uncle's murder—had been drawn towards the vortex of a war in which five alien nations were engaged. He was able to see that his friendship with Boris had much to do with it; but events over which he himself had no control had compelled him—whether or not he had wished it—to take an active part in the operations. If the truth be told, he was by no means eager to undertake this last and dangerous enterprise. All along, his sympathies had been with the Turk. And yet, there was Boris to consider;

he could not desert his friend at the eleventh hour. Moreover, there was Alma.

For hour upon hour, after the darkness had fallen, Boris, the staff-officer, and Philip sat in that cold, draughty, and deserted house. Few words passed between them. Neither Boris nor Philip was much inclined to talk. From time to time, the staff-officer struck a match and looked at a watch he held in his hand. After a while, the silence became hard to bear. At such moments, the bravest man is apt to tremble in suspense.

At last, the staff-officer closed his watch with a snap.

"Ten o'clock," said he. "It is time for you to start."

All three rose to their feet. The staff-officer accompanied them to the door.

"Au revoir," said he.

Side by side, the two friends set forth together, into the darkness, towards the beleaguered town.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO OF A TRADE

THE night was exceedingly dark. The sky was clouded over; and it seemed probable that, before daybreak, there would be another fall of snow. If the moon had been out, their task had been fraught with danger from the first, for their figures would have been conspicuous at a distance against the whiteness of the snow.

The ring of forts that encircles Adrianople has a circumference of about twenty-five miles.

The city itself has great natural facilities for military defence. Lying, as it does, at the junction of three rivers, it is situated on low-lying ground, surrounded by hills upon the east, north, and west, and protected by a wide marsh to the south. The Maritza and its tributary, the Arda, flow towards the town from the west, by way of the valley in which the railway station and the settlement are situated. About two miles farther downstream, the Tunja joins the Maritza from the north, forming a com-

plete semicircle around the western side of the city.

It will be seen, therefore, that it was well nigh impossible for the Bulgarian spy and his companion to enter Adrianople from the west. Their only hope—as the general had pointed out—lay by way of the left bank of the Tunja whence they could approach the city without having to cross one of the numerous bridges across the rivers.

The hills upon the north are both higher and steeper than those toward the south. Nearly every hilltop is crowned by a redoubt—that is, a fort enclosed upon all sides by parapet ditch, and banquette. Each of the redoubts around Adrianople is isolated and independent as far as provisions and ammunition supplies are concerned, though all maintain intercommunication between themselves and the city, and in case of attack afford what is known as "reciprocal defence"—that is to say, an attacking party advancing upon one redoubt would be subjected to cross-fire from the works on either side.

Hence, there was little to prevent Boris and Philip reaching the walls of the town in safety. It was here their real danger would begin. The city itself was patrolled by police and encircled

by a cordon of double sentries, a guard being mounted at the entrance to every street. The object of this was more to see that no member of the civilian population left the city, than to prevent the entrance of anyone from outside. It was of the utmost importance to Shukri Pasha, the Governor, not to allow any person, who might be able to give valuable information to the enemy, to pass through the sentries to the Bulgarian lines.

Half walking, half running, with soft footsteps upon the crisp, powdery snow, they passed under the very guns of the Bashi Faki Fort. Even on the darkest night, it is possible to distinguish the sky-line. The sharp, conical hill stood out before them, blacker than the darkness of the sky. They could see the level line of the parapet, above which, here and there, were distinguishable the head and shoulders of a sentry, motionless and alert. So close were they that they could even see the tall, upright flagstaff. The flag was lowered, but a gentle breeze was blowing from the north-east, and this was sufficient to make the cord strike against the staff with a tapping sound, irregular, but persistent, not unlike the noise made by a telegraph operator at work at the transmitter.

Keeping as much as possible to the low ground, they crept forward as stealthily as possible. Suddenly, Philip was tripped up; there was a peculiar "twanging" sound, like the note of a banjo string; and he was hurled headforemost into the snow.

For some seconds, he lay quite still. He almost feared to breathe. Boris came toward him on hands and knees, and whispered in his ear.

"Keep quite still," said he, "and listen. I don't think we were heard."

"What happened?" asked Philip.

"Low wire entanglement—under the snow. Lucky it was not mined. In one or two places if you trip over the wire, you fire a fougasse."

"What's that?" asked Philip.

"Oh, it's a kind of shallow mine," said Boris. "But, keep quiet, and listen."

They remained for some minutes without speaking, but could hear no movement among the sentries in the fort. It was obvious that the noise of the wire had not been heard.

When they endeavoured to move forward they found it was no such easy matter to disengage themselves from the wire entanglement which seemed to be all around them. Owing

to the darkness, they were not able to retrace their footmarks; and it was fully half an hour before they were free of the obstacle, and were able to continue upon their way.

Keeping to the foot of the hills, they walked due south, parallel to the river. They were now well within the line of eastern forts which had been so thoroughly reconnoitred by Boris during the days prior to the outbreak of the war. They expected to meet with no further difficulties until they reached the outskirts of the city. As for their subsequent course of action, they decided it would be useless to make any definite plan, until they saw for themselves the difficulties with which they would have to contend.

They came upon the city unexpectedly, at a place where there was a long, low-lying building not unlike a barrack. They turned to their left, and had not gone ten yards before Boris seized his friend by the arm and pulled him roughly to the ground.

"Down!" he whispered. "Down on your face, for your life!"

Philip obeyed, though, as yet, he had no inkling of his danger. Side by side, they lay, close as hares, upon their faces in the snow.

Then, some distance away, Philip heard footsteps cheeping in the snow. Listening, he came to the conclusion that it was a solitary man who approached. They could overpower him, if the worst came to the worst.

The man came nearer and nearer, and passed so close to them that they were able to make out his shadow in the darkness. He was stealing forward on tiptoe, in an attitude so crouched that he was practically moving on all fours. From time to time he stopped and listened. It was obvious from the fellow's attitude that he had no more business without the city than themselves.

They dared not speak to one another, but the same thoughts were passing in the mind of each: they wondered who this man could be. That he was endeavouring to enter the city unknown to the sentries, and was ignorant of the countersign, was perfectly clear. He could not therefore be a Turk. On the other hand, he was neither a Bulgarian nor a Servian, for General Ivanoff would undoubtedly have warned them that another attempt was to be made to get into the city. At all events, there was someone abroad on this dark, frosty night on the same trade as themselves. It was Bo

who resolved to profit by this unforeseen occurrence. As soon as the man was sufficiently out of earshot, he whispered in Philip's ear.

"We will follow this man," said he.

Life, even in the ordinary course of everyday affairs, consists largely of the unexpected. No man was ever so great as to be able to control events unconnected with any conduct of his own. Plans, therefore, must frequently be changed; and this is particularly the case in time of war. Here was a circumstance they had not counted on, they had never dreamed of. They would use this fellow as a scout. If he succeeded in getting into the city, they would follow after him; if he failed, they would be warned in time, and could try some other means of ingress. It was not, perhaps, the most gallant course to pursue, but those who hold their lives of such small value as to follow the profession of a spy are not inclined to be over-chivalrous.

Going forward, by means of long, silent strides, they followed after the man, keeping as far behind him as they could without losing sight of his shadow in the darkness. It was some consolation to them that he appeared to know where he was going. Never for a

moment was he seen to hesitate, though frequently he stopped to listen; and at such times they stopped, too, and held their breath.

Presently, they heard voices—voices of men who laughed. Without doubt, they were approaching one of the guards. The man lay down in the snow, and they followed suit.

They remained thus for a long time; it must have been nearly an hour. The man may have had some definite object in view; but it is more likely that he was rooted to the spot in fear, and dared not approach nearer to the guard.

By the end of that time, a calamity had befallen them: the moon was appearing in the midst of a luminous haze in the sky, immediately overhead. Its light was not great, but it seemed much to them whose eyes had grown accustomed to the almost impenetrable darkness. To their left, they were able to see the great sheet of snow that extended towards the hills. To their right were trees and a high wall above which they could just distinguish the tall minarets of a mosque.

After a while, the voices were silent. No doubt, the sentries had been relieved, and some joke had been passed in the guard-room. Even

in times of adversity, the Turkish soldier is one of the lightest-hearted fellows in the world. They could now see the man they had followed quite distinctly. He was lying full length behind a shrub.

Suddenly, he got to his feet, and to their alarm, approached in their direction. Philip wormed himself into the snow, endeavouring to make himself as flat as possible. There followed two soft "clicks" as each one of the friends drew back the hammer of his revolver.

When not more than ten paces distant, the man stopped dead. For a moment, they thought they were discovered. Almost immediately, however, to their intense relief, he turned away to his left, and approached the clump of trees. It was then that they obtained a fair view of him in the moonlight.

He was a tall man, broad of shoulder and of muscular build, dressed in European clothes. To their surprise he was wearing a fez. Since he had no overcoat, he must have been bitterly cold, for it was still freezing hard. Moreover, he was without a waistcoat; they could see a white shirt, open at the neck, and also some sort of white waistband which doubtless supported his trousers. As long as the man faced

them, it was easy to distinguish him in the darkness, by reason of his white shirt and waistband; but, when he turned his back, he became, for the time being, invisible against the blackness of the trunks of the trees.

After a few seconds, he reappeared. They were now able to see his dark figure moving at the foot of the wall, as if he were searching for something. Presently he stopped again. He was now nearer to them than ever. Once more he paused to look about him, to see if he was observed.

Then, with a spring, he jumped to the top of a buttress which supported the wall to about halfway up. With his feet upon this, he was able to place his hands upon the top of the wall. Cautiously, he looked over. Then, quick as a cat, he swung both legs across, and dropped down on the other side.

Boris sprang to his feet, and ran to the wall with Philip close at his heels. As they did so there came a loud shout from the other side. A Turkish word of command rang out in the night like a shot. "*Dur!* Halt! Who goes there?"

Evidently the man set off running for his life, for they heard the snow crunching under his feet. But, when a rifle was fired, he ran

back to the wall; and they heard him cry out in Turkish that he was a loyal subject of the Sultan and meant no harm.

Several soldiers came up to him, and doubtless surrounded him. As they ran forward, Philip could hear their bayonets shaking on the standards of their rifles. They were close on the other side of the wall; and when one of their number spoke, his voice was quite distinct. The following conversation ensued, of which every word was audible to Philip and Boris:

"Who are you?"

"A friend."

"Give over the countersign."

"I don't know it."

"Ah, indeed! Is that so? Then, my friend, we shall make short work of you."

"I wish to be taken to an officer."

"That is exactly what we propose to do."

"I will be able to explain matters. I come on an important mission. I have important news for the ears of the governor. When I have told my story, I shall be rewarded."

Several of the soldiers laughed.

"You will be rewarded with an ounce of lead," they answered, as they led their prisoner away.

Philip and Boris remained listening on the outer side of the wall. They heard the footsteps of the soldiers die away; the sound of their voices became a low, persistent murmur. Somewhere in the city, a clock struck one. They wondered what time it was; it was certainly past midnight. It might be half-past twelve, one, or half-past one; in all probability the last.

Boris climbed stealthily to the top of the buttress, and looked over the wall. He returned to tell Philip that the guard-house was not thirty paces distant, and that there was a sentry near at hand. He suggested that they should move farther away, in the hope of finding another buttress by means of which they would be able to get over the wall.

As silently as they could, they moved away from the guard-house, and after a few minutes, came to a place well suited to their purpose. The trees were here more plentiful, and closer together; and in one place a branch actually overhung the wall. Boris climbed this tree to reconnoitre, and returned with the news that the way was clear. They had nothing to do but drop down on the other side, where they would find themselves in a spacious garden, doubtless the property of a man of wealth.

A few minutes later, they were actually within the garden, though not yet by any means out of danger. Indeed, as they were soon to discover, their position was more precarious than ever.

For more than an hour they searched the garden from end to end. At first they found only one gate, namely that by which was the guard-house, whither they dared not approach for fear of the soldiers. At the other end of the garden was a large house, in the windows of the ground-floor of which were several lights. When they looked in at these windows, they saw to their amazement that upon the floor of every room were numbers of soldiers, all sound asleep. Whoever lived in the place in times of peace was now absent, either by order or by choice, and at least a battalion of infantry was billeted on his estate.

They drew away from the windows, and conversed together in the centre of the garden, where there was little danger of being discovered.

"I cannot make it out," said Boris. "That fellow whom they captured evidently knew where he was going. He would never have jumped in here if he had not known a way

out. There *is* a way out, and find it we must.

For another half-hour they searched along the wall, and at last came to a small door half hidden behind a bush, which doubtless communicated with a street. Philip was barely able to suppress a cry of exultation; but this feeling of triumph vanished on the instant, when Boris tried the door and found it locked.

They strove together to open it; but the lock refused to give. From the first, they gave up all idea of breaking it open; it was made of stout wood, barred with iron, and thickly studded with nails.

"That fellow had the key," said Boris. "I am sure of it. For us, it is altogether hopeless."

CHAPTER XIX

RATS IN A TRAP

INDEED, their situation could hardly have been less pleasant. They were encompassed, upon three sides, by high walls, on the inner side of which there were no buttresses; also, there were no trees in the garden growing close enough to permit them to ascend to the top of the wall. They knew of two gates: one guarded by Turkish soldiers, and the other locked. On the fourth side was the house, filled with soldiery; and where there are sleeping soldiers, there are sentries close at hand, and firearms. To endeavour to pass through the house would be utter madness. They could never hope to succeed.

Boris asked Philip if he had anything to suggest. The young Englishman thought the matter out, and then answered in a whisper.

"I can open that door," said he, "but it will take me a long time to do so. If I start at once, I shall not be finished by dawn."

"Which means," Boris took him up, "that we shall both be shot as spies."

"Do you think it impossible that we could find some place where we could hide?" asked Philip, more confident than his friend. "If we could lie up all day, I would undertake to open the door to-morrow night, as soon as the soldiers are asleep."

"How do you propose to do it?" asked Boris, practical even at such a time as this.

"I have a knife in my pocket," answered the other, "I would break off the blade, and sharpen the stump on a stone, so as to make a screw-driver. The lock is screwed from this side. I felt the screws with my fingers."

"You had best begin now," said Boris. "If we are not out of this place by daybreak, we shall be discovered, wherever we hide; they will find our footmarks in the snow."

"I, too, have thought of that," said Philip; "but, I do not think the danger so great as you imagine. In the first place, if you put your hand to the ground, you will find that the snow has been trampled under foot by the soldiers; secondly, it is going to snow again: it is actually beginning already."

The next objection put forward by the young

Bulgarian was wholly rational, but it cannot be said that he was in an optimistic frame of mind.

"If the soldiers walk about the garden in the daytime," said he, "where do you imagine we are going to hide?"

"On the roof of the house," said Philip.

"On the roof!" echoed the other, bringing out the words in jerks.

"Yes," said Philip. "You noticed a kind of wing that runs out into the centre of the garden, one story high. At the end of this is a large water-tank, and above that I noticed a pipe which connects with the gutter under the eaves. This pipe is not more than ten feet long, and is probably quite easy to climb. The roof itself is well suited to our purpose: strictly speaking, there are two V-shaped roofs, between which we will be able to hide. As far as I could see, there is no window in the house immediately above this wing."

Boris laid a hand upon his friend's shoulder.

"It seems to me," said he, "that if I ever get out of this alive, it will be due to you. You are never at a loss."

"We may get frost-bitten," Philip went on; "but even that is better than death. Come, help me to search for a large stone with a rough

surface, upon which I can sharpen my knife. can set to work at that at once; it will sav time to-morrow night."

It was not long before they found the ver stone they wanted. By then, the snow wa falling fast. They approached the house for th second time with great caution, and found th water-tank without difficulty. One after th other, they mounted to the top of this, an thence climbed to the roof. It was just Philip had described, and seemed admirab suited to their purpose. They lay down side b side in the snow, in the broad gutter betwe the roofs, close under cover of the wall of th house. Then followed a more than miserab hour. Had they not been wearing fur overcoa they would have been frozen to death.

The snow was still falling when the dav arose in the east; and they were able to see t dark hills, across which runs the Kirk Kili road, before the steel-blue of approaching da light. Then it was that Boris Petroff was ma aware of the sagacity of his friend: there w small chance they would be discovered. Th could not be seen either from the windows the house or from the garden. All traces their footsteps had been covered by the snow.

That day was one which Philip Thornton is never likely to forget. At about midday, the sun came out, and the snow ceased to fall. The frost was too great, however, to permit the snow to thaw. During the day they heard the soldiers walking to and fro in the garden; and several came to the water-tank, beneath the roof where they were hiding, and broke the ice in order to wash or procure water for cooking. Boris had brought with him four large ration biscuits; and they were able to satisfy the pangs of hunger with these. As for drinking, they were at liberty to quench their thirst with the snow that was several inches deep upon the roof.

As they lay in hiding, they took a vital interest in the tedious course of the sun. It was with feelings of intense relief that they watched the red glow of sunset fading gradually to leaden grey beyond the hills to westward. Owing to their cramped position and to the bitter cold, both were so tired and stiff that it seemed as if their limbs were rigid, without joints, and they would never be able to walk again. As nightfall approached, Boris was particularly impatient. One of his disposition is naturally averse to inaction: he desired to be up and doing.

During the early hours of the night, the

murmuring sound of distant conversation wa
constant in their ears. Soldiers were talking i
the room immediately beneath them. It wa
nearly eleven before the last of these had gon
to sleep; and then, they deemed it advisable t
allow an hour to pass before they ventured t
descend from the roof.

One after the other, as silently as possibl
they dropped to the ground, and ran in th
direction of the gate they intended to ope
They were not able to find this at first, for th
night was again dark; the moon had not y
risen. When they succeeded, they were sudden
obliged to secrete themselves behind the bu
that grew by the doorway, to allow the offic
of the day on visiting rounds to approach t
guard-room.

As soon as all was clear, Philip produced
home-made screw-driver from his pocket, a
immediately set to work. He found the ta
fully as difficult as he had thought. The brok
blade of the knife was slightly broader than
heads of most of the screws; and in consequenc
was continually coming out of the grooves, wh
were by no means easy to find in the darkn
Also, the gate had been recently painted,
the paint served to hold the screws in positio

Philip worked until the perspiration stood in beads upon his forehead, whilst Boris stood by, unable to give any help beyond, now and then, a word of encouragement. It was an occasion when perseverance and patience are of the greatest value, and hot haste at a discount.

At last, Philip's efforts were crowned with success: all the screws had been extracted, and he drew the lock away in his hand.

It was now necessary to cover up all traces of their escape. Their footmarks would not be distinguishable in the trampled snow from those of the soldiers who had walked in the garden during the daytime. However, if they left the lock off the door, suspicions would be instantly aroused. Philip picked up a stone from the ground, and drove back the catch of the lock by force. It was far easier to put back the screws than it had been to take them off, and the matter was finished in about a sixth of the time. They then closed the door. They hoped that it might be days before it was discovered that the door was no longer locked.

Side by side they hurried on their way. They found themselves in a narrow, winding street, utterly deserted, silent as the grave. They came forth into the main street in the open place by

the Cathedral. Here there were several sentries so they turned into the byways, and walked rapidly in the direction of Haji Bagdadi's café.

When they arrived at their destination, the moon was out; it was about two o'clock in the morning. They approached the café stealthily by way of the ruins at the back, where they found to their dismay that a troop of cavalry was bivouacked around the very place where the spy's dispatches were hidden. There was, indeed, a sentry close at hand.

For a few moments a brief whispered consultation took place between the friends. It was plain that Boris himself could not recover the dispatches, since he did not know where they were. They feared to question the sentry, since they would be immediately challenged and asked for the countersign, which they would not be able to give. Hence only one course lay open to them: namely, for one of them to creep forward under cover of the ruined wall, and endeavour to obtain the dispatches unobserved by the sentry.

Asking his friend to keep watch and give him warning should anything unexpected happen, Philip crawled forward on hands and knees, and succeeded in gaining the wall—the centre of

of the three, the very one in which he had hidden the papers. He was fully prepared for some difficulty in finding in the darkness the small cross he had scratched upon the loosened brick with the foresight of his revolver, but he was not in the least prepared for what actually came to pass. As we have said, it is the unexpected that invariably occurs. The sentry approached to within ten yards of Philip, and calmly seated himself on the ruined wall somewhere about the very place where the all-important dispatches were hidden.

Philip waited for some moments; but the man made no attempt to move. Then he realised that, if he stayed there longer, he would most certainly be discovered; for, sooner or later, the sentry would be relieved. Deciding to give up the task as hopeless—for that night, at least—he returned with the utmost stealth to Boris.

"It's no good," he whispered. "We must get away. Daylight will be here in a few minutes. I can try again to-morrow night."

Not until they were once again in the street, were they able to stand upright, and walk with rapidity. They returned to the central part of the city, and before they reached the street in which is the Ottoman Bank, it was quite light,

and the temperature had risen so considerably that the snow was falling from the roofs of the houses, and the streets were ankle-deep in slush.

Many people were now abroad, for the most part soldiers and zaptiehs. There was little to convey the fact that the city was beleaguered, that a great investing army lay without, that the eyes of Europe were fixed upon the fate of Adrianople. It is true that the majority of the shops in the bazaars were shut, and nowhere were any food-stuffs to be purchased. Still, there is much the same condition of affairs as may be seen in any English city on a Sunday. The truth was, nearly all the grain and provision in the place had been commandeered by the military authorities, and were served out to the inhabitants in regular, and none too liberal, quantities of weekly rations.

They spent the entire morning walking about aimlessly. It was in the neighbourhood of the Utch Sherifli Mosque that Boris Petroff stopped dead, and laid hold of his friend by the arm.

"Have you any notion where we are going?" he asked.

"Not in the least," said Philip.

"We must find a lodging," answered the other.

"and somehow endeavour to get food. We ought to sleep during the day. We will have our work cut out to-night."

It was then that a soldier approached the steps of the mosque. In one hand he carried a bucket in which was a brush; under the other arm was a roll of papers. Putting down the bucket upon the ground, he pasted a notice upon the door of the mosque, and then went upon his way.

Boris and Philip ascended the steps, and read the placard, from end to end. It was written in three characters: in Turkish, in Cyrillian, and Greek. It was to the effect that the military authorities had received information that Bulgarian spies were at large in the city, and that a substantial reward would be given to anyone giving information that would lead to their arrest.

Philip turned to his comrade, and whistled between his teeth.

"How do you account for this?" he asked.

Boris shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot explain it," said he; "wheels within wheels. There are spies, and spies who dog the footsteps of other spies. This country is impossible to explain."

"There is no question, I suppose," said Philip "that that notice refers to us?"

"Not the least," said Boris. "We had bes get out of the way as quickly as possible."

They walked down a side-street, and turne into an even narrower and meaner thoroughfar to the left. Not desiring to attract attention they hastened on their way, as if they had som urgent business to attend to. It was then, o looking back, that Boris noticed that they wer being followed by a very diminutive and ver untidy boy, of about fourteen years of ag Boris had noticed this urchin seated on the step of the mosque.

They turned to the right, and then to the lef and then back again into the street whenc they had come. And still, they were followe by the boy.

At last, Boris, seeing that there was no o to observe him, turned sharply round, a caught hold of the youngster by the scruff the neck.

"Look here," he demanded, "what do y want?"

The boy grinned from ear to ear.

"The effendi is a stranger?" said he.

"No," said Boris, "I am no stranger; I kn

Adrianople well. Now, perhaps, you will tell me what you mean by following us."

The boy's answer seemed perfectly natural, in view of the fact that the city was besieged.

"My mother," said he, "has a private store of provisions. She is an Armenian. We came to Adrianople from Gallipoli, last year. My father is dead; he was killed at the time of the Insurrection. Just now, I heard the effendi say to his friend that he was hungry. Now, my mother sells her bread. Of that the police know nothing. She says that, when the siege is over, she will be very rich. I thought the effendi might like to buy provisions. In these days, there are many people in Adrianople who have not sufficient to eat."

Boris turned to Philip.

"That seems quite a plausible story," said he.

"Quite," answered the other. "I dare say the boy's mother would accommodate us with a lodging for to-night, and perhaps for to-morrow night."

The urchin jumped at the suggestion. Small wonder that he did!

"My mother has a room," said he, "which she will certainly let you have."

"Lead on," said Boris. "We will follow."

The boy conducted them through a maze
streets, and brought them, at last, to th
northern side of the city, upon the left ban
of the Tunja. There, in a narrow, squal
thoroughfare, he knocked upon a door, whic
was immediately opened by a thin-face
Armenian woman.

Thereupon, her son and heir introduced th
strangers, and explained his mission with co
scious pride. The woman, with a dour fac
and without speaking a word, led them up
rickety flight of stairs to a large room at th
back of the house in which were two divan
which, to the weary travellers, looked particu
larly inviting.

"How much do you want for this room?
asked Boris. Whereat, the woman mentione
an exorbitant price.

It would have been short-sighted policy no
to have haggled, and after some argument the
agreed to take the room at less than half of th
sum the woman had originally asked.

Whilst Boris was clinching the bargain, Phil
looked around him. The room appeared quit
clean. There was but one window, and this wa
protected by vertical bars of iron. Outside
beneath the window, was a patch of waste lan

which lay between the dwelling and the river, beyond which were visible the Hospital and the ruins of the Old Palace. Everywhere, the snow was melting, and water lay in pools. It was a scene of desolation, disorder, and want of method; but, again, there was nothing to convey the fact that, beyond the dark hills that faded away to the north, the Bulgarian and Servian batteries did but bide their time to open fire upon the city. The morning was utterly silent. From no quarter was the sound of firing to be heard.

"You are satisfied?" Boris asked the woman.

She shook her head, implying that she was. Turkey is not the land of topsy-turvydom that China is, but it is strange that in this matter of expressing a negative or affirmative, their actions are diametrically opposed to ours.

"Then," said Boris, "here is the money for one night, in advance. You will leave us, please. My friend and I desire to go to sleep. We take our siesta early."

"May you sleep well," said the woman, with a sinister look. At that, she went from the room, and closed the door. And no sooner had she done so than they heard it locked and bolted from the other side.

Philip rushed to the door, seized the handle, and endeavoured with all his strength to force it open. A short struggle told him that his efforts were likely to prove in vain. At that, he ran to the window, and tried to shake the bars. Then he fell back, and looked at his friend with eyes strangely bright and opened wide. His face was pale as Death. Boris, who had drawn his revolver, remained in the centre of the room.

"We have been fooled!" cried Philip. "This is a trap!"

Philip rushed to the door, seized the hand and endeavoured with all his strength to fore open. A short struggle told him that his e were likely to prove in vain. At that, he to the window, and tried to shake the Then he fell back, and looked at his h with eyes strangely bright and opened His face was pale as Death. Boris, who drawn his revolver, remained in the cent the room.

"We have been fooled!" cried Philip. is a trap!"

CHAPTER XX

A RIDE FOR LIFE

PHILIP clenched his fists so tightly that the skin showed white upon his knuckles. As for Boris, he stood in the centre of the room, with folded arms, his teeth fastened on his lip. Neither thought just then of the death which was bound to be theirs. Their feelings of pride had suffered the severest of blows. It was exasperating to think that they had ventured so much, that they had passed through so many dangers, and outwitted their enemies so often—only to be foiled, at the eleventh hour, by a small boy and a woman.

So overcome was Philip that he flung himself down upon one of the divans, and buried his face in his hands. Boris toyed with his revolver, and by the expression upon his face it was evident that he meant to die fighting with his back to a wall.

How long Philip lay upon the divan he was afterwards unable to say. At any rate, when he

got to his feet, he found Boris kneeling at
window.

"What are you doing?" he asked, cross
to his friend's side.

It was not a question that required an answ
Boris had taken from his friend's pocket
knife which had been converted into a scre
driver, and was now engaged in loosening
screws that held the bars across the window.

"I had forgotten that!" cried Philip, with
note of exultation. "We still have a chance.

There followed a cry of impatience from Bo
as the screw-driver slipped from the groove
one of the screws.

The truth was, this fragile and very primiti
implement was already much the worse for we
It took them as long as half an hour to get
first screw out; and there were six screws
each bar, three at the bottom and three at
top. In consequence, it was already dusk by
time they had freed the central bar at
bottom. The screws at the top proved mo
amenable; but, when the bar had been tak
down, it was pitch dark without.

They then discovered that, after all, there
some practical value in that strange and pecul
garment—the modern frock-coat. The distan

was too great from the window-sill to the ground to permit them to jump. Philip's coat was torn to shreds along the seams, and the several ends made fast together with reef-knots. This improvised rope was tied to one of the two remaining bars, and hand over hand Boris lowered himself to the ground.

Philip followed, as quickly as he could. At the bottom, they found themselves immediately in front of a window in which was a bright light. Fortunately, the blind was drawn, else they must have been observed.

What tempted Philip to do what he did cannot be explained. At critical moments, we do strange things; and curiosity is very natural in us all. He noticed that, at the right-hand corner of the window, the blind had been drawn aside, just sufficiently to enable him to look into the room. One glance was enough: he saw that he was in a fair way to understand the disasters that had befallen them since their arrival in the city.

Immediately facing the window was the same man whom they had followed, and whom the soldiers had captured, the night before. There was no mistaking his broad, somewhat rounded, shoulders, and muscular build. He

was still wearing his white shirt, open at t
neck, and the white scarf around his wai
He was standing opposite a table, at whi
was seated a second man, whose back was
the window.

Philip drew away, and clutched Boris
the arm.

"Look here!" he cried. "The man
followed yesterday is *Barco!*"

Such, indeed, was the case. They could n
doubt, for a moment, that it was Barco who h
betrayed them, who had caused the placar
to be posted in the city, offering a rewa
to whoever should capture the spies. H
motives were not far to seek. He had be
prompted by two incentives which seldom
together: profit and revenge.

They were now in possession of so many
the facts of the case, that to explain the whc
matter was easy.

After the gipsies had been surprised in t
house in the cypress grove at Rodosto, Bar
had evidently remained within the town. Ther
he had no doubt kept a watchful eye upc
Philip, whom he looked upon as his natur
enemy and victim. He knew Philip so we
by sight that he had evidently penetrated th

young Englishman's second disguise. Also, no doubt, he had received intimation that the two friends had departed from Rodosto. Now, it must have been evident to the meanest understanding that, since the whole country between Adrianople and the Chatalja Lines was in the hands of the Bulgarians, there was no necessity for an Englishman and a Bulgarian officer to disguise themselves as Turks, unless they desired to enter Turkish territory. The only territory then held by the Turks in the northern part of Thrace was—as we have said—the area enclosed by the outpost line around the beleaguered fortress. It therefore must have been obvious to Barco that Philip Thornton and his friend, the Bulgarian lieutenant, were about to endeavour to enter the city. And here was his chance of profit and revenge—a chance which he was not slow to take.

They came to this conclusion by means of a simple process of deduction. Surmise however, is not proof; but cold proof now came to hand. Whilst Philip waited at the window, Barco spoke to the man who was seated at the table, who wore a fez and a long military coat.

"Sir," he was saying, "these spies are already

within my power. I have but to hand th
over to your Excellency to claim the reward.

"Then," said the other, in a quieter vo
"you have but to do so, and the reward
yours."

"If you will pardon me, sir," said Ba
who remained standing in an attitude of ser
respect, "if you will pardon me saying
I should advise you to do nothing in ha
I can tell you much that your Excellency d
not know. In the first place, one of th
spies is an Englishman—the nephew of
gentleman who was so foully murdered in
mountains last spring."

The man with the cloak was seen to st
His voice, however, was completely calm.

"Well?" he asked.

"The other spy is a Bulgarian lieutena
They are great friends, these two, though t
met for the first time only two days bef
the Englishman was murdered. I can
you exactly what has happened since. T
young Englishman came into Adrianople,
guised as a Kizilbashi, and took service w
a certain Haji Bagdadi, proprietor of the C
of the Five Nations. There he was joined
his friend, also disguised as a Turk, and

was instrumental in saving that friend from the zaptiehs. He escaped from the city a day or so before the siege began. Where he went to, I do not know; but he arrived in Rodosto just before the armistice was declared. Thence, he and his friend came here, disguised for the second time."

"There are two questions I would like to ask," said the man who was seated. "In the first place, how do you know all this?"

"That, sir, with your permission, is my business. I desire to sell information; I am not bound to say how I got it."

"Very well, then," said the other. "Secondly, I would like to know why you tell all this to me."

"That, sir, I am about to explain. I asked myself why these two men returned to Adrianople. To gain information, doubtless. But there are many in the Bulgarian army who could disguise themselves as well, who can speak Turkish as well, and who would be able to find their way about the streets of this city. This spy was specially sent for. That much I know. He and his friend travelled all the way from Rodosto by convoy, through the snow. Hence, I am inclined to believe that they have come

for some special purpose. I have an idea w
that special purpose is."

"What is it?" asked the other.

"The spy escaped from the military pol
but he fell into the hands of gipsies. I my
am a gipsy; and it was I who searched
when we captured him that night. We fo
upon his person neither maps nor plans
notebooks. That struck me as peculiar at
time."

Barco paused. The man at the table lay b
in his chair, and folded his arms.

"You're a clever scoundrel," said he, "
more brains than most of your class. Tell
what you think."

"I think," said Barco, smiling broadly at
he deemed a compliment, "I think he has
turned in order to endeavour to obtain
dispatches. I also have an idea where t
dispatches are."

"Where?" said the other, now rising to
feet.

"In, or near, Haji Bagdadi's café," answ
Barco.

"Why do you think that?" snapped
other. Hitherto he had been no more th
casual listener; now he was all animosity

quickness. "Why do you think they are there?"

"With your permission, sir, for a very simple reason. The spy was pursued through the streets by zaptiehs. He was in hot haste; he had no time to stop and hide his papers. He came into the café breathless; I was told that by several people who were there. He was taken outside by the Englishman, and hidden in the well, where I and my comrades found him. Therefore his papers must have been hidden *after* he had left the café and *before* he descended into the well."

"By thunder!" cried the other. "You're right! We must allow these fellows to escape, follow them, and take them red-handed at their work."

So saying, the man with the cloak swung round upon his heel, and Philip Thornton set eyes upon Yildirim Bey.

On the instant he seized Boris by the arm.

"Come!" he cried. "Come! Run for your life!"

Philip leading, and Boris close upon his heels, they raced headlong through the streets of that vast, silent city. They had the greater part of the town to cross before they could come to

Haji Bagdadi's café. They had got no farther than the main bazaar when a gun was fired in the direction of the Military School.

"That's a signal!" cried Boris. "They have discovered our escape."

A little farther on, quite near at hand, a bugle sounded the alarm, which was quickly taken up from post to post, from guard-room to guard-room. Their lives, indeed, were in the hands of Providence. It seemed to them then that nothing short of a miracle could bring them forth of this alive. Breathless, and with the perspiration streaming down their faces, they arrived in the vicinity of the café.

Here they were obliged to go forward with greater caution. Their experience on the previous evening had warned them what to expect. The moment was one of supreme anxiety. Haste was a matter of the greatest importance; there was not a moment to lose. They decided to overcome the sentry by force, and take the dispatches before the guard could rush to arms.

It was, no doubt, the same sentry who had been on duty the previous night. In any case he was seated in the attitude in which they had left him, upon the ruined wall, his head nodding on his chest as though he were half asleep.

And Boris Petroff took him from behind, as a cat springs upon a mouse. Before the man had time to struggle, he was down upon the ground; before he had time to cry out, a coat was wrapped about his head, so tightly that he was scarcely able to breathe. He was pinned to the ground by the strong arms of the young Bulgarian, whilst Philip searched along the wall. There was no movement in the café where the guard was established. Evidently, in this distant part of the town, they had not heard the alarm bugles which had sounded in the north.

Philip was unable to find the small cross he had made upon the brick without the assistance of a light. The time was come when caution, which spells delay, would be fatal. Taking a match-box from his pocket, he struck a light.

Before the match burned out, he discovered that for which he sought. He caught hold of the loosened brick, and pulled it from the wall. Then, thrusting in a hand, he seized the spy's dispatches. That done, he returned to Boris.

"I've got them!" he cried. "We must be off! Every second counts."

Boris, who was kneeling on one knee, looked up into his friend's face.

"What am I to do with this fellow?" he

asked. "The moment I let him go, he w
cry out and warn the guard. I cannot kill hi
in cold blood. Besides, a shot would be fatal."

It was a cruel thing to do, but there w
no alternative. Philip liked it as little as h
friend; but the deed had to be done. H
picked up a large piece of wood that was lyi
near by, which, no doubt, had once been pa
of one of the rafters of the demolished hou
With this he dealt the unfortunate sentry
stunning blow on the head.

The man lay senseless on the ground. Th
waited a moment, to see if he moved; but t
poor fellow remained quite still. Philip be
down, and felt his heart. He was relieved
find that it still was beating.

"Now!" he cried, rising to his feet. "W
shall have to run for our lives."

As we know, they had entered the city
the north-east. They were now towards t
south; and even had they desired to do so,
would have been sheer folly to have return
whence they came. They decided to make d
south, in the hope of being able to leave t
city somewhere in the neighbourhood of t
Constantinople road.

"Stay!" cried Boris, on a sudden. "Hors

We should stand a better chance if we were mounted."

It will be remembered that the troops billeted in Haji Bagdadi's café were cavalry, whose horses were picketed between the ruins and the house. The Englishman has the reputation of being the best horse-master in the world. It is the custom of English cavalrymen to attend to their horses, before they attend to themselves. The Turk is very different. The Ottoman army comprises several regiments of cavalry; the Bulgarian cavalry is indifferent, in both quality and numbers. The plain of Thrace is probably the finest cavalry country in the world; and yet, throughout the war, Sali Pasha's Independent Cavalry Division accomplished absolutely nothing. The main reason of this was the want of care—if we do not style it gross neglect and cruelty—with which the cavalry horses were treated. The Turk regards it as wholly unnecessary to take the saddle from his horse's back, or the bit from its mouth, when his regiment bivouacks; and the inevitable results of that are sore backs and saddle-galls which render whole regiments useless.

We are not concerned so much with the short-sighted policy of the Turkish commanders,

as with the fate of our two adventurers. Th
fact is stated simply to explain how it was th
they found the cavalry horses, outside the Ca
of the Five Nations, already saddled and bridle
To select two of these that seemed in better co
dition than the others, and leap upon their back
was the work of an instant. A moment late
Philip and Boris were moving to the south.

They were not fifty yards from the ruins b
hind the café when, once again, they heard t
alarm bugles sounding from the guard-room
The news of their escape had no doubt be
telephoned to the forts and to the ultimate pa
of the city.

Presently, they passed a patrol of zaptie
moving at the double, in the direction of t
city limits. They rode past at a canter. Fo
tunately for them, in their heavy fur co
and fezes they resembled two Turkish office
They passed unchallenged, and came in a lit
while to Kirish Hane, which lies between t
Maritza, a little below its junction with t
Tunja, and the cemeteries immediately w
of the Kavkas Fort.

Here, the houses are thinly scattered, and th
are several roads and lanes, running parallel to
another towards the forts. They were not cl

of the graveyards, when they became aware of a large party of mounted men, moving at a gallop in the same direction as themselves.

They set spurs to their horses, and went like the wind to the south. A strong voice was lifted in the night, calling upon them to halt; but their only answer was a more vigorous use of the spur. Then they saw the cavalry open out upon the plain. Several shots were fired, but the bullets went wide in the night. This had the effect, however, of drawing another search-party in their direction from the Kirk Kilisse road; so that they were hemmed in upon three sides, and their ultimate escape seemed doubtful.

They knew that, in a moment, they must encounter an examining post, where the guard would doubtless be under arms, and ready for their approach. They came upon one of these unexpectedly at a sudden bend in the road.

"*Dur!*" rang out the voice of the officer in command.

They wheeled from the road, and went at a gallop across the plain. The examining post opened fire, and five volleys, in quick succession, burst upon the night. The bullets sang past their ears, like a swarm of bees.

Crouching forward in their saddles, they

galloped onward, across country so rough and uneven that, at any moment, one or other might experience a fall, which would be fatal, for the pursuing cavalry were all around them, in the form of a crescent, and the night was filled with their shouts.

Suddenly, from the hilltop on which is situated the Kavkas Fort, the long divergent arm of a searchlight flashed into the valley; and they stood revealed both to their pursuers and to those within the fort.

Boris knew that farther down the valley they would be able to ascend the hills, but that in the immediate vicinity of the fort the slopes were too steep for horses. It was a question of a race at headlong speed, across two miles of country; and had it not been for the searchlight, they had had a good chance of reaching safety, since they were already quit of the town.

The searchlight found them in the shadowy recesses of the valley, as the sharp eyes of a bird of prey alight upon its victim; and that blinding light followed them, like a moving finger, as they galloped for their lives. And presently, the fort opened fire, and white shells burst around them, to make the night a pandemonium, and the valley alive with sudden flashes of fire.

Turning in his saddle, Philip saw that several of their pursuers were gaining ground apace, while many had dropped out of the pursuit altogether. One man in particular was well-mounted and a bold rider. He had out-distanced his companions by two or three hundred yards.

As Philip looked, this man drew a revolver, and fired a single shot. No doubt he realised at once the folly of wasting ammunition. The man who can shoot straight with a revolver from the back of a galloping horse is never likely to be born.

At last, the dark shadows of the hills appeared before them. They were within sight of refuge. The guns from the fort had ceased to fire, though the searchlight still clung to their track. They had only the one man to fear, who was now so close to them that they could hear the breathing of his horse as it struggled forward upon the sodden ground, where its hoofs sank deep in the soft clay beneath the melted snow.

Boris drew nearer to his comrade, and spoke in a quick, breathless voice.

"This man must be stopped," said he. "He has become a nuisance. Ride away from me—about thirty yards. Then, rein in suddenly,

when I give the word. Let him pass in betwee
us. We will come upon him from behind."

This ruse was fully as successful as it deserve
to be. Their gallant pursuer saw them ope
out; but, before he had time to turn his horse'
head in one direction or the other, the fugitive
had both reined in, and he was past them, havin
overshot the mark. Two out of five shots fro
Boris's revolver went home, and the Turk'
horse plunged forward on its knees, and the
rolled over on its side.

They waited but for an instant, and saw th
man rush to his horse's head, and endeavou
to force the animal to rise. It was then that h
faced the searchlight, and Philip recognised
once again, the features of Yildirim Bey.

A moment later, they were galloping over th
open, rolling downs. Valley after valley opene
before them, and at last they drew rein upon
hilltop, and looked down upon the bivouac fire
of the great Bulgarian army. Their journey
was at an end.

RANCE

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THE RETREAT FROM LULE BURGAS

CHAPTER XXI

THE ASSAULT

By the receipt of Boris's dispatches, General Ivanoff was placed in possession of valuable information concerning Top Yolu, Kavkas and Yildiz, and, indeed, the whole line of forts extending from the north to the Baba Eski road. For all that, an organised assault cannot be directed upon a modern fortress without considerable preparations. Moreover, delay was to the advantage of the Allies. The Bulgarian and Servian commanders had calculated that it would cost 30,000 men to take the city by storm, and they did not desire to attempt this extremely hazardous enterprise until the soldiers of the garrison were discouraged, and their numbers diminished, by disease, famine and the hopelessness of their cause.

In order to improve their chances of success, the General Staff drew up a plan of attack by which the full weight of the Bulgarian onslaught was to fall upon the town from the south-west, on the right bank of the Maritza. This plan

was purposely conveyed by false spies to the Turkish authorities at Constantinople, who immediately transmitted the news by means of wireless telegraphy to the Governor of the city, Shukri Pasha, now promoted to the rank of Ghazi, or Conqueror of the Infidel, certainly expected the assault in the direction of Merkez Fort, the railway station, and the Frankish settlement. Consequently, it was in this quarter that the Turkish outposts were especially vigilant.

Meanwhile, the Bulgarian general was receiving reinforcements, both from the Servian Government and the Bulgarian divisions in Macedonia. During the first weeks in March the numbers of the investing army increased to 150,000. Within the garrison there were reported to be 60,000 men, though the truth of this will probably never be known.

Divisions and brigades of troops cannot be moved like chessmen on a board. It took time to mass the allied troops between the Kirk Kilisse and the Baba Eski roads. Siege guns had to be brought round from the north, and temporary bridges built across the Tunja. The work was carried on, for the most part, by night. Above all things, it was necessary to maintain the utmost secrecy.

Without warning, on the evening of Sunday, the twenty-third of March, a terrific bombardment was opened from all sides upon the city. The firing was continued at daybreak, and it was during that morning that the infantry began to move forward upon the whole line of forts on the left bank of the Tunja and Maritza. Toward evening the Allies had made considerable progress; the Turks had been driven from many of their advanced posts.

The fight continued throughout the whole of the next day; and that night, several battalions of infantry were pushed forward under cover of darkness and ordered to entrench themselves within decisive range of the forts.

Dawn, on the twenty-fifth, beheld one of the fiercest and most sanguinary struggles in the annals of modern war. The Bulgarian and Servian soldiers clung with tenacity to their positions. In other parts of the field Turkish advanced posts were rushed at the point of the bayonet, and several prisoners were taken. The close of that day's fighting found the Turkish troops holding manfully to their position. It seemed possible that the fortress, even yet, would succeed in repulsing the attack.

That night, the Bulgarians repeated their

tactics; more troops were pushed forward into the firing-line, and ordered to entrench. Day-break discovered a great force of allied troops within two hundred yards of the line of forts.

Had the Bulgarian and Servian battalions lain in that position for many hours, they must have been swept away, almost to a man, by the severity of the Ottoman fire. A shallow shelter trench, scraped in haste in the darkness, is no fit rival for a modern fort, whose smooth glacis offers a perfect field of fire to magazine rifles and quick-firing guns. The Bulgarian general waited till the dawn was sufficiently advanced to enable his men to see their enemy, and to elude the obstacles strewn in their path. Also it is seldom possible in pitch darkness for officers to exercise that control over their men which is indeed, necessary if the day is to be won. In the half-light of morning, in those grey moments before the sun was risen and after the night had gone, the assault fell like a thunderbolt upon the forts of Adrianople. From north to south, along the whole front of the eastern face the Turkish guns strove to maintain the Crescent on the great dome of the Sultan Selim Mosque.

A combat such as this can never last for long. Fighting at point-blank range, armed with the

latest triumphs of the eternal science of war, men must fall like flies. By nine o'clock the slaughter had been terrible; and the first forts had fallen.

These were the forts towards the north. Here the barbed wire entanglement had been uprooted during the night, and the Bulgarians, with their Servian allies, rushed the guns at the bayonet point. The fall of Aivas Baba and Kura Chesme was quickly followed by the evacuation of the intervening positions. By half-past nine, the Ottoman troops had been driven from the whole of the eastern sector, and the iron gates of Adrianople, the strongest and most important fortress in the Turkish Empire, had been thrown open, after five long months of siege.

Almost immediately, the town was seen to be in flames. In several places the Turks set fire to their own city, in order to destroy their ammunition and supplies. By ten o'clock, the scene stood for all that is terrible and unholy in modern war. In many parts of the field, the firing still continued. Several of the forts held on, refusing to surrender. To the last, the indomitable Turk proved that he had lost nothing of the stubborn gallantry his fathers had displayed, thirty-five years since, upon the field

of Plevna. The carnage had been terrible; to the very ditches of the forts the dead lay in heaps. And as for the city itself, the roofs of the houses and the tall stately minarets of the mosques were wreathed in clouds of black, rolling smoke.

Philip Thornton had been allowed to attach himself to the staff of one of the generals of division. From the summit of a hilltop, with Boris at his side, he watched the progress of the attack. He was probably the only European eye-witness of a spectacle that can only be compared to the storming of Port Arthur.

The two friends having obtained permission from the general, rode forward to one of the positions evacuated by the enemy. There they found a regiment of Bulgarian infantry, entrenching themselves on the hill they had captured in order to be prepared for a counter-attack. There was small chance, however, of any attempt being made to recapture the position; for, not only was the town on fire and the inhabitants panic-stricken, but the Twentieth Servian Regiment was actually advancing upon the city from the south.

Almost immediately, the order was given for the Bulgarian cavalry to move forward and

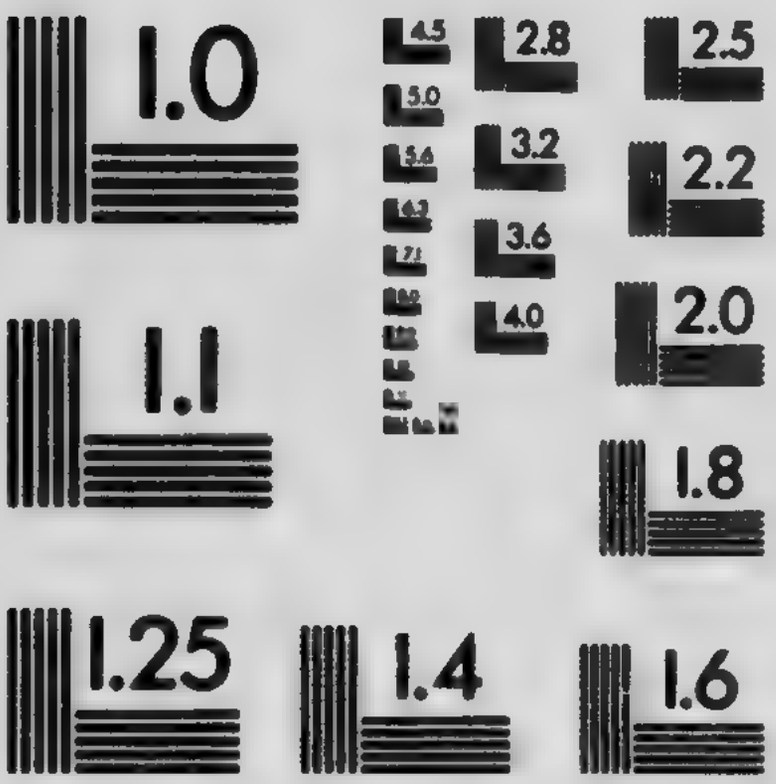
occupy the town. Philip and Boris, joining the leading squadron, rode forward upon the Kirk Kilisse road.

They found the eastern suburbs utterly deserted. The inhabitants had fled to the centre of the city. The open place before the Mosque was crowded with terror-stricken people, who actually fought with one another in their anxiety to get away from the approaching Bulgarian troops.

Escape, however, was impossible, for the main streets were choked with humanity. The whole population ran aimlessly from place to place. They knew nothing of the clemency and kindness with which the Bulgarians had treated the villagers who had not fled before their advance. They fully expected to be cut down by the sabres of the troopers. And yet, they knew not where to go: the town was surrounded on all sides; it was falsely reported that the Long Bridge had been blown up; they dared not return to their houses for fear of the fire, which was spreading rapidly across the city, whilst, from time to time, loud explosions rent the air as whole stores of dynamite, gun-cotton and cordite sent rafters, beams, and brickwork sky-high into the air.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Philip had noticed that the northern side
the city was as yet untouched by the fire, thoug
the Military Barracks, a little to the east, we
ablaze. He told Boris of his intention, a
turning their horses' heads, they forced their w
along the main street, in which lies the Konak.

It was not long before they came out up
the left bank of the Tunja. Thence they we
able to find their way to the house where th
had been taken by the small boy who h
followed them from the steps of the Mosque.

They found the door locked, and no one ca
to their summons. They had thoughts of brea
ing the window, in order to force an entran
when they heard a door slammed violently
the other side of the house.

It was Philip who was the first to cat
sight of a man, running, as if for life, acr
an open stretch of wasteland in the west. O
look was enough to tell him that this w
Barco—the very man he wanted. Quick
lightning, he leapt back into the saddle, a
followed by Boris, set forward in pursuit.

Barco was a swift runner; moreover, fe
had now laid so strong a hold upon him th
he was possessed of more than ordinary agili
He fled, like a madman, running with gre

jumps, and turning at all angles, lest either of his pursuers should fire.

For all that, he never lost his head: he kept to the wasteland, where the ground was rough and much strewn with refuse, and where it was impossible for the horses to break into a gallop. He reached the bridge across the Tunja in safety, and it seemed probable that he would gain the opposite bank, where he would be able to hide among the hovels that surround the ruins of the ancient Palace.

This, no doubt, was his aim, but his hopes were destined to be thwarted. That bridge, which is called Shalnesguez Bridge, is exceedingly long, by reason of the fact that its centre rests upon an island. Before Barco had reached the opposite side, a party of Bulgarian soldiers had come forth from the suburb to the north and set foot upon the bridge.

These soldiers took in the situation at a glance. Philip and Boris had naturally cast aside their Turkish disguises, and were now dressed in the uniform of Bulgarian officers of the line. The soldiers beheld a man, who was in all probability a Turk, fleeing from two of their comrades. Several of their number raised their rifles to the present and opened fire.

Barco was between the hammer and the anvil, as the saying goes. He looked first one way, and then the other; and then, in desperation, climbed over the parapet of the bridge.

He was like an animal that is hunted to the death. He seemed to have altogether lost his faculty for reason, which Yildirim Bey had commended. He could hope for nothing, but to put off the inevitable moment when he must face his death. His object—blind and futile as it was—was evidently to reach the island, though thence he could have no chance of ultimate escape.

When Philip and his comrade and the Bulgarian soldiers looked over the parapet, they beheld their victim not six feet below them, with upturned face, his heels dangling in the air. He was holding to one of the iron stanchions that supported the bridge, and was making every effort to work himself along towards the island. Below him, the deep water of the Tunja flowed upon its course, swollen to a great volume by the melted snow from the hills.

Upon Barco's face, terror, hopelessness, and great physical exertion had stamped their certain marks. The veins were swollen upon his forehead; his lips were parted, and his teeth were

clenched; the thin bones showed upon the backs of his hands, as he gripped the iron that held him from his death; his eyes were fixed upon the faces that looked down upon him from above. Though Philip remembered that the man was the murderer of his uncle, he had not the heart to shoot.

None the less, it would, perhaps, have been kinder to have done so. The iron stanchions ended abruptly in a stout post that descended sheer into the water. It was not possible for the fugitive to reach the island by the way that he had chosen. The poor wretch hung there for several minutes, during which the agony upon his face was, indeed, horrid to see.

At last, one hand lost its hold. For a few seconds he was kicking in mid-air. Then he lifted his voice in a long howl of terror. And then he dropped like a stone, and disappeared beneath the turbid, swirling water which formed little waves and shifting eddies around the pillars of the bridge. Barco had found his "dark, moving grave." The prophecy of the old gipsy fortune-teller had been revealed.

Boris and Philip, leading their horses, returned to the streets of the city, to find that the turmoil had considerably abated. In several places the

fires had been quenched or had burned themselves out. The people had discovered that they were not to be massacred by the Bulgarians; and many had returned to their homes. It was already dusk.

It was no easy matter to find their way to the head-quarters of the Bulgarian general to whose staff they were attached. They asked several officers they encountered, but no one seemed to know, until a certain colonel directed them to proceed to the south-western part of the city, whence they had come.

It was long after nightfall, and they were leading their horses along a narrow by-street, when they came face to face with a Turkish officer of high rank who was walking with slow steps and with head bent low. It was Philip who recognised Yildirim. Without delay, he made known his identity, and mentioned by name the general for whom they were looking.

The Bey told them in which direction they should go. "I have just come from there," said he. "It was into his hand that I delivered up my sword. He was kind enough to give it back to me, and say that he wished to inflict no personal indignity upon those who had taken part in the defence."

He was silent for some moments. Philip found it difficult to speak; in the very tones of the voice of this brave soldier there was the gist of the whole tragedy that had befallen the Turkish Empire.

"It is Fate," said Yildirim. "The will of God be done."

"But you foresaw all this," said Philip.

"I feared it," answered the other; "but I hoped and prayed that my fears might not come true."

"At least," said Philip, "the honour of Turkey is saved. I was at Lule Burgas, and I watched the assault this morning. I am able to testify that the Ottoman soldier is as great as he ever was."

"You were at Lule Burgas?" said Yildirim, looking up. "How was it you were there?"

"My story is a long one," answered Philip. "I would like to tell it to you; but, as it is, I am afraid I cannot look you in the face. I thought myself the friend of Turkey; but I have every right to be numbered among her foes. To some extent, I was the slave of chance."

"That are we all," said Yildirim. "Our lives are governed by Fate, inexorable, unchangeable. Perhaps, some day, you will tell

me your story, and I will listen with ears not so deaf as you may think. For the present, *au revoir*."

So saying, he continued on his way—to all appearances a downfallen, broken man; in reality, a symbol for all that is proud and great and gallant in his nation.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

AND now the story of the adventures of Philip Thornton is come to an end. It is admitted, by all who know the full facts of the case, that his experiences, and the part he took in the stupendous events of which we have told, were unique. He witnessed not only the capture of Adrianople, but that colossal event which was the decisive moment of the war—the Battle of Lule Burgas. In a large measure his adventures were due to chance. As we have said, he was borne forward upon the current of the war, wholly ignorant of where he was going, as a straw drifts upon the tide. When he entered Adrianople disguised, in order to avenge his uncle's death, he could not have foreseen the strange sequence of events that was destined to befall him. The whole thing is still so fresh in his memory that, even yet, he sometimes believes that the history of those weeks is nothing more than a dream.

Yet the results of the Battle of Lule Burgas are evident on every hand. Upon that wide

field, stronger even than the thunder of the Bulgar guns, sounded the death-knell of the Turkish Empire in Europe. Far back in the centuries, the Seljuk Turks swept forward across the peninsula of Asia Minor, and crossed the Bosphorus. Their advance was but an offshoot of a great western movement on the part of the Turanian races: for—as we have pointed out—the Turks, and the Bulgars themselves, are of Tartar descent. During their migration through Asia Minor, to some degree, the Turks fused with the Arabs, and the Bulgars have fused with the Slavs; but the fighting spirit that inspires them both is the same which carried the arms of Jenghiz Khan to exact tribute from the Czar.

Six centuries of conquest closed upon the field of Lule Burgas, which, on that account alone, deserves to rank with Marathon and the Nile, as one of the most decisive battles the world.

Philip was fortunate in being able to witness this colossal conflict in the company of one who was an acknowledged expert in the art and technicalities of war. Without Steed Bayly's comments, the whole thing had been inexplicable to the inexperienced eye—a mere jumble of sounds, with glimpses of small, running men

like 'infuriated mice,' and white puffs of smoke. The times are past when the untrained spectator could look down upon a battle, such as Cannæ, Crecy, or even Talavera, as one might nowadays regard a boxing contest or a football match. Modern battlefields extend for miles.

There are two sides to war from the standpoint of the reader; the emotional side, which is expressed in descriptive writing, and to which no pen is ever likely to do justice; and the technical side, less stirring, perhaps, but as absorbing as a game of chess. And it was upon this latter that Steed Bayly was able to expound. By reason of much study, and vast experience in the field, he knew more of the art of war than many a soldier of repute.

For all this, we must remember that the Thracian campaign was but one scene in the great Balkan drama. It was the most important scene, no doubt, but the movements of the main Bulgarian columns were by no means independent. The advance by way of Mustafa Pasha and Kirk Kilisse was in co-operation with other movements to the west and to the south.

Whilst the battle of Lule Burgas was being fought, a Bulgarian army was operating in the east of Macedonia. The Servian army descended

upon Uskub, the ancient Servian capital, by way of Kumanovo. From the south, the Greek advanced upon Salonica and Yanina, whereas the Montenegrins completed the investment of Scutari.

It would be folly to suppose that the tremendous successes that attended the arms of the main Bulgarian army in Thrace could ever have been achieved, had not several of the Turkish Army Corps been fully occupied towards the southern and western frontiers of the empire. This does not by any means detract from the credit that is due to the Bulgarian. In spite of the want of organisation and unpreparedness for war of the Turkish army, Bulgaria single-handed, was no more capable of defying Turkey than Holland of declaring war against the German Empire. This fact had long since been recognised by King Ferdinand; and thus it was that "the Balkan League" had come into existence, which has brought about the downfall of the Crescent, and put an end, once and for all, to the interference in the affairs of Europe of the Sublime, but wholly incompetent Porte.

Our narrative having been concerned with the adventures of Philip Thornton, has carried us

into the midst of the turmoil of the swift and brilliant campaign in Thrace. Those who wish to read of events in Macedonia, in the west and in the south, are referred to the pages of authentic history which, in course of time, will doubtless appear. Therein they will be able to read the whole story from start to end of the fall of Salonica and the capture of Yanina, of the surrender of Djavid Pasha and the capitulation of Scutari.

Wars are either futile, or their results are likely to be permanent. The reasons for the Crimean War do not apply to-day. To all intents and purposes, Balaclava, Inkermann, and Sebastopol might never have taken place; so many human lives and so many millions of money might have been thrown in the dust. Other campaigns and victories are of great historical importance they have served to mark the boundary lines of an empire whose star is in the ascendant, and to seal the fate of another, the days of whose greatness are passed. Such was the Balkan War, that raised the Balkan peoples to the dignity of a Power, and hurled Turkey to the shades.

After the taking of Adrianople, there was a lull in the hostilities in Thrace. For the time

being, the Bulgarians had spent their force. It was then that certain officers were given leave to return to Sofia, and among these was Boris Petroff, who was accompanied by his English friend who had stood so loyally at his side throughout.

It was a long journey in a slow train, upon a railroad much blocked by supply and hospital trains. The toll of casualties was immense. Large numbers of the Bulgarian soldiers before the lines of Chatalja had been laid low by the cholera which had so ravaged the Turks during the retreat from Lule Burgas. It was night when the two friends arrived at the Bulgarian capital; for all that, Alma Petroff was waiting at the station.

They found the city a scene of festivity and rejoicing. Great crowds were assembled without the Sobranye and the War Office. Details concerning the capture of the Turkish fortress were coming in, hour by hour. The list of casualties was arriving, and a long death-roll it was. Still, Bulgaria was ready to pay the price. Within the course of a few weeks, she had risen from obscurity to greatness, and was proud of the heroism of her sons.

The cafés were a blaze of light; the streets were thronged by jubilant, excited people. From

open windows came strains of music, laughter, and song. King Ferdinand had addressed his troops from the heights above Chatalja, whence he had looked down upon the blue waters of the Sea of Marmora—the goal of all their hopes.

Still, Alma Petroff was a woman; and if her heart was full, it was mainly because her brother had been spared. If Boris had been taken from her, she could not think what she would have done. They had been so much to one another, since the days when they had played as children in the rose-gardens on the slopes of the mountains to the south.

Philip remained in Sofia for nearly a month, at the end of which time Boris's leave was expired. And they were far happier days than those which these three had passed together before the outbreak of the war. Then Philip's outlook upon life had been clouded over by the tragic death of his uncle; Boris had had little time for recreation, since he had been kept at his work for long hours at a stretch. Neither was Sofia in the autumn of 1912 the same city as in the spring of the following year. If there were many graves upon the wide fields of Thrace, Bulgaria, at least, had known the worst, and the future lay before. Even as the spring heralds the approach of a new summer, so was an old

nation born again. The heart of Bulgaria wa
young.

We have told of events so recent that, as yet
they have not risen to the dignity of history
At the present moment, Philip Thornton is i
England; but it is bruited abroad that he in
tends to return to Bulgaria, for reasons whic
are not so far to seek. We know—though h
never had the face to own it—that Alma Petro
played by no means an unimportant part i
deciding the course of action he took. Had i
not been for memories of the sweet face he ha
left in Sofia, it is doubtful whether even hi
friendship for Boris would have led him t
penetrate, for the second time, into the city o
Adrianople, for the purpose of securing the spy
dispatches. Much of the admiration he has fo
the Turk is due to the impression he receive
on his encounter with Yildirim Bey. Even no
he feels ashamed that he was used as a paw
in the great game that brought about the down
fall of a nation that could still produce so nob
an example of the dignity and courage to whic
manhood may attain.

Alma was never blind to the services tha
Philip rendered her brother. On their retur
to Sofia, Boris was not slow to sing the praise
of his friend: indeed, he never tired of tellin

how, again and again, Philip had saved his life. It was this, perhaps, that awoke the echoes of love in the young heart of the girl. It was in such a manner as this, it will be remembered, that Desdemona loved Othello—a man of an alien race. These things have happened since days of old; and they will still continue to happen, there is every reason to suppose, until the end of Time.

In this world, all events are strung together in the great and wonderful sequence of Nature, which is at the root of all things. The rains fall, and the mists rise, and the rain falls again. There is no break in the march of summer from the first butterfly to the last faded rose. In the course of all humanity, Love and War must take their several parts. One love gives birth to a new chain of circumstance, and opens, as it were, a by-path hitherto untrodden and unknown, which may lead to golden cities, at present in the clouds.

Even so—though a lesser matter by far—one war gives rise to new political intrigues; and we have yet to see the fruit of the great deeds of which we have told. It would be impossible to predict, with any degree of certainty, what the future holds in store for the new-born Balkan Powers. It is certain,

however, that, sooner or later, another, and perhaps a greater, war, will come forth of the fall of Adrianople and the capitulation of Scutari Europe is smouldering, like a fire that awaits the breeze. And even if the calamity is averted we have referred to the indomitable Law of Race and the march of the Bulgars has begun. Nations conscious of the strength of their youth, put on the harness of war; and only a crushing defeat can stem the tide of their advance. Greece lies in danger, and she knows it. And after all, even nations are only pawns in the game.

So, in the end, we have talked of greater things by far than the mere adventures of a hero; but that is because—as we have endeavoured to explain—nothing is without a meaning. It is well to think of that; to consider that the man who takes his life in his hands, and sets forth upon adventure, is helping to lay the foundation stones of an empire, in furtherance of the cause of Progress, Humanity, and Justice; for these are the great abstract principles that move the pawns and the knights and the kings upon the chess-board of the world.

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